

Why has the New Testament Church relocated Mount Zion from Israel to Taiwan?

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I, Paul Farrelly, declare that this sub-thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Farrelly". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Paul Farrelly
17 October 2008

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Preface

In 2007 I was engaged in a language study program at National Cheng Kung University in the city of Tainan in southern Taiwan. During my time in Tainan I was able to travel on the weekends, visiting a number of the religious groups in the area. One of these groups was the New Testament Church. I was fortunate enough to twice visit their community on what they call Mount Zion. While there I was able to wander the mountain alone, as well as have the tour guide services of Alan, one of the senior residents, and Connie, an American church member who was staying at Mount Zion. In addition to providing me with a number of books, posters and pamphlets, Alan and Connie gave me contact details for New Testament Church branches overseas. Subsequently I made contact with their church in Brisbane and was invited to visit a worship service in there as well as to go to their farm and temple in the South East Queensland hinterland – UNNS Ω. UNNS is pronounced ‘un neuf neuf sept’, French for 1997. As is explained later, UNNS is one of the key prophecies revealed by Elijah Hong and appears frequently in New Testament Church material.

My day with the New Testament Church began by visiting their service at a house in the suburb of Robertson. Robertson is just north of Sunnybank, a major centre for the Chinese community in Brisbane. Like many urban areas developed in Australia during the last 15 years, this part of Robertson has large houses built on relatively small blocks. Driving along a back street I was alerted to my destination by a group of seven to ten modern silver and white cars parked on the opposite gutter. When I approached the front door of the house I heard the congregation raucously singing a hymn accompanied by an electronic piano. I opened the large wooden front door

cautiously and went inside. The congregation turned to see who had entered, and on seeing my somewhat uncertain face, eagerly gestured for me to enter the large family room that had been set up as a place of worship. A co-worker (the New Testament Church term for adherent) was leading the congregation in song from behind a lectern with the lyrics to the hymn displayed on a large flat-screen television behind him. The repetitive lyrics to this particular hymn were in both Chinese and English and the congregation had a series of hand movements that were coordinated to the chorus. The singing was placed on hold as my presence, as a “son of Japheth”, was announced to the congregation. Japheth was one of Noah’s sons and is considered by some, including the New Testament Church, to be the progenitor of Europeans. The congregation then introduced themselves and their families, one by one. There were about 20 members of the congregation, ranging from toddlers to grandparents. One family was represented by three generations. As I recall, the majority of the congregation were of Malaysian heritage, with one lady from the South Pacific. Her family had joined the New Testament Church nearly 30 years ago.

With the congregation having introduced themselves, I was then asked to talk about myself and explain my interest in Mount Zion. While doing this I noticed that a teenager was filming me. This set the tone for the rest of the day, as most of my movements were recorded. When asked why such a volume of videotape was devoted to me, it was explained to me that the young people of the church enjoyed making videos and that the footage may be sent to the church’s leader, Elijah Hong, to keep him informed of what was happening in Australia.

After the introductions I was taken aside by a small group who wanted to talk with me in more depth. Some of the local co-workers work in professions such as medicine, banking and architecture. Over morning tea they took time to explain in greater detail elements of the New Testament Church's theology. One of the group, an architect, lent me a thesis that he had written about Mount Zion while studying in Taiwan, a useful resource primarily for the maps of Mount Zion. I had the chance to discuss Mount Zion further with a church representative during the drive out to the church's farm and temple at UNNS Ω . The church also has a larger farm, UNNS α , on the Sunshine Coast north of Brisbane.

UNNS Ω is a farm of approximately 200 hectares in the mountains west of Brisbane. The land was used primarily as an asparagus farm prior to the New Testament Church purchasing it. I was taken into the non-descript two-storey farmhouse and presented with an exceptionally good meal. There were about 8 different dishes, ranging from common Chinese egg and tomato omelette to salad and lasagne. As the church does not espouse vegetarianism, several of these dishes contained meat. After the meal, I was taken on a tour of the various fields that the church cultivates. A number of different green vegetables, such as lettuce and cabbage, were being grown in the rich volcanic soil. All of the New Testament Church's food is grown without the use of chemical pesticides, fertilisers or preservatives. At the time of my visit, the farm at UNNS Ω was still in the process of becoming an accredited organic producer with the local organic authorities. Having visited the farm's expansive vegetable fields, I was then driven to the wooded plateau where the main temple is located.

I had seen pictures of the temple at UNNS Ω in a pamphlet but this did not prepare me for how it appeared in real life. The temple itself is a slightly larger scale replica of the main temple at Mount Zion in Taiwan (See Figure 1). It sits at the edge of a large clearing, mirroring the spatial arrangement in Taiwan. And, just as the space on Mount Zion in Taiwan focuses on the altar at the point known as El Zion, there is a replica altar at UNNS Ω that also serves as a focal point. One face of the altar is inscribed with an English translation of the same text as written on Mount Zion's altar in Taiwan: 1 Kings 18:36-39 and two paragraphs expounding Elijah Hong as God's chosen prophet. The other face of the altar tells a brief story of the New Testament Church's history at UNNS Ω, highlighting the struggle the church experienced in building the temple and how the Tribulation is near. In obtaining the land on which UNNS Ω is built, the church had several existing properties rezoned into one larger property. Significantly, the rezoned property has been designated as 'Lot 1997'. There is a copy of the council plan displayed in the temple that shows evidence of this (See Figure 2).

UNNS Ω can be seen as a humble though ambitious attempt to expand the majesty and power of Taiwan's Mount Zion to a foreign land. It is, to a degree, something of a microcosm of Mount Zion. There are replicas of two of the main holy sites on Mount Zion—the altar at El Zion and the Holy Temple—and just as in Taiwan, the farm is devoted to the production of organic fruit and vegetables. In fact, while Mount Zion is the main mountain for the New Testament Church, other consecrated lands such as UNNS Ω are considered to be equally blessed and God is present at them just as He is at Mount Zion.

Introduction

Mount Zion is nestled in the mountains of Kaohsiung County in southern Taiwan and is the primary spiritual and physical home of the New Testament Church. It is the belief of the church's prophet and leader—Elijah Hong— that Mount Zion has moved from Israel to Taiwan and has been chosen by God as His home and the venue for the impending Tribulation.

Mount Zion has moved

The following thesis explains why the New Testament Church has relocated Mount Zion from Israel to Taiwan. Chinese religions, particularly Taoism, have long utilised mountains as places of worship¹. That a new holy mountain appeared in Taiwan is a worthy topic for consideration; this is an uncommon event in itself. However, as a modern Taiwanese version of a well-established holy mountain in Israel, the relocated Mount Zion will be shown to be the product of the complex interaction of a diverse range of influences.

I begin the first chapter by discussing the original and better-known Mount Zion in Israel. The biblical Mount Zion is believed by Jews and members of certain Christian denominations to be home of Yahweh (or God) and that the chosen people will rule from there. As a result, it became a powerful symbol from which many people began to draw strength during the time of King David. This is reflected in Zion theology and the Zion tradition that continues into the modern era. It is

¹ Hahn, T. (1988). "The standard Taoist mountain and related features of religious geography." *Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie* 4: 145-156.

common for the name 'Zion' to be extrapolated from the mountain and applied to Jerusalem or to the whole of Israel. A number of passages in the Old Testament describe Mount Zion as a place of abundance, renewal and, when the time comes, the place from where the Lord will rise up and where His kingdom will be built.

Achieving recognition for a holy mountain that God has chosen to relocate to Taiwan has required much more than audacity on the part of the New Testament Church. A number of structural changes in Taiwanese society have made it possible for the New Testament Church to exist and develop Mount Zion in the manner that they have. Christian missionaries established a presence in Taiwan during the three centuries prior to Japanese colonisation in 1895. While the Japanese rulers initially tolerated Taiwan's religious diversity, they were actively encouraging Japanese religions by the time their rule ended in 1945. The Kuomintang (KMT) began their decades of rule immediately after the Japanese were ousted. Despite the KMT's efforts to assert their legitimacy by repressing potentially subversive religious groups, Protestant groups actually grew in number and size. This was partly due to the KMT's accommodation of Western missionaries who had escaped from mainland China, an action that found favour in the USA.

The wealth of Taiwan grew as the KMT strengthened and solidified its rule. Not only did society have more money to contribute towards religious groups, the state was improving the island's infrastructure. When coupled with reforms that opened up previously untilled land to farmers, the scene was set for Elijah Hong and his followers to lay claim to what would come to be known as Mount Zion.

In attempting to understand the experience of the New Testament Church and their relocation of Mount Zion, it is useful to consider other New Religious Movements from East Asia. Korea's Unification Church, China's Eastern Lightning and Taipings and Japan's Tenrikyo all offer examples that help illuminate the beliefs of the New Testament Church that underscore its relocation of Mount Zion to Taiwan.

In chapter two I outline the history of the New Testament Church and describe its key beliefs, prophecies and eschatology. Kong Duen Yee—known to her followers as Sis. Kong—was a former Hong Kong movie star who returned to Christianity following a series of crises in her life and thereafter formed the New Testament Church. Utilising her dramatic and oratorical skills, Kong preached across South East Asia, setting up churches and raising the ire of local authorities. It was on one of her missions, this time to Taiwan, that Kong met the man who was ultimately to take control of the New Testament Church and spearhead the development of Mount Zion – Elijah Hong.

Hong had already laid claim to Mount Zion himself and was waiting for God to send His prophet when he met Kong. The early years on Mount Zion were a challenge for Hong and his fellow pioneers for not only were they struggling to establish a viable community on the mountain, they were also engaged in a power struggle with Kong's daughter, Ruth Cheung, for control of the New Testament Church.

Hong eventually took control of the church and in doing so maintained the doctrinal position upon which Kong founded it. This is underpinned by believing in a fundamental difference between God's chosen New Testament Church and the rest

of the population of the world: secular, Christian or of other faiths. The triple baptism of blood, water and spirit as well as the concept of apostleship are key factors in shaping the church and positioning it in opposition to competing claims of the truth. A series of prophecies such as 7.21, 9.24 and UNNS are utilised to justify the actions undertaken by the church through its apostles and co-workers.

Perhaps the most significant event in the relatively short history of Mount Zion is the New Testament Church's exile from it between 1980 and 1986. This event crystallized the church's attachment to the mountain and shaped public opinion of the church. A protracted legal battle was waged, at times turning physical as co-workers clashed with the authorities. The church was ultimately able to return to the mountain after an absence of six years.

Hong weaves a number of ideas together in his justification for Mount Zion. He believes that all of God's chosen prophets, including Kong, have had a designated place and as the prophet of this era, his designated place is Mount Zion. Not only does Hong draw upon Kong's prophecy that a spiritual revival shall emanate from "the isle of the East", he is also firm in the belief that God has forsaken Mount Zion in Jerusalem and the Middle East. Mount Zion plays the central role in the New Testament Church's eschatology as espoused by Hong. For some decades now the church has believed that the Tribulation would occur soon on Mount Zion: Jesus will descend on the mountain and co-workers of the New Testament Church will marry the Lamb of God before ascending into heaven during the Rapture.

In chapter three I describe the modern-day Mount Zion. The landscape of the mountain is discussed, with analysis of certain landmarks and the spiritual significance they hold for the New Testament Church. Despite the church's strong espousal of "God-based" activities that adhere to the word of God as recorded in the Bible, there are a number of features of Mount Zion that reflect aspects of Chinese culture that permeate the New Testament Church.

Further analysis is devoted to activities undertaken on Mount Zion and how the existence of the community on the mountain facilitates them. The New Testament Church has a long established organic farm based on Mount Zion and has recently begun to operate an education system for its children. Mount Zion serves as a pilgrimage destination for Taiwanese and overseas co-workers and is also well equipped for tourists. At this point I examine the scholastic body of work on the difference between sacred and profane space and how Mount Zion is best categorised using this paradigm. I also discuss how the New Testament Church ascribes Mount Zion with the dual roles of Eden and the home of the Ark.

Finally, I discuss how the New Testament Church extends Mount Zion from the physical boundaries of the mountain in Taiwan to envelop the consecrated lands owned by the church in a number of foreign countries. God's presence is equally strong in these consecrated lands, such as UNNS Ω in Queensland, as it is on Mount Zion. The New Testament Church and Mount Zion remain relatively unknown in Taiwan and even more so overseas despite the best efforts of Kong, Hong, the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade (the church's evangelising group) and the church's co-workers to prophesise, publicise and proselytise.

Theoretical considerations

Before analysing the New Testament Church's Mount Zion, I will attempt to locate the church within both the broader Protestant church and the field of New Religious Movements. In doing this I will highlight how the church's eschatology fits into existing schema.

Taiwan's Protestant community is a small yet diverse part of the island's religious fabric. Murray A. Rubinstein acknowledges that Protestantism has undergone a process of indigenisation in Taiwan and that this must continue if the community is to mature. He sees the urge to keep Protestantism close to its western roots and resist Sinification as hindrances that will retard the growth of Taiwan's various churches and condemn Protestantism as "an alien faith system that has but little relevance to the Chinese as they go about their daily lives"². Rubinstein identifies the Presbyterian Church, True Jesus Church, Assembly Hall Church and Taiwan Baptist Convention as accounting for the bulk of Taiwan's Protestants³. As an indigenous church, the New Testament Church sits outside mainstream Protestantism, primarily differentiated not only as a Pentecostal/charismatic church, but also by its theology and dealings with the state⁴. However, as Rubinstein accurately states, "It is the dream of Mount Zion that is both the church's claim to uniqueness and its major

² Rubinstein, M. A. (1991). *The Protestant Community on Modern Taiwan: Mission, Seminary, and Church*. Armonk, New York, M. E. Sharpe, Inc. pg 155

³ Ibid. Page 9.

⁴ Ibid. Page 143.

problem”⁵. As will be demonstrated, other Protestant churches would consider the New Testament Church’s theology and belief in Mount Zion heretical. The New Testament Church’s unyielding faith in the teachings and revelations of Kong and Hong, as well as their disregard for any theological developments since Martin Luther (apart from their own) mean that they are isolated from other Protestant faiths, both theologically and socially. The church is open to criticisms of heresy when contrasted with mainstream Protestantism. To take a parallel example, opponents of Mormonism have accused it of heresy because of its belief that baptism into their church is the only legitimate way of becoming a Christian⁶. The New Testament Church also makes a claim to uniqueness of this type, differentiating itself from mainstream Protestant churches.

As a recently formed independent church that has its own theology, the New Testament Church fits snugly into the academic study of New Religious Movements (NRMs). The term NRM represents an attempt to move away from commonly used and pejorative terms such as ‘cult’ or ‘sect’. It is for this reason that NRM is a useful term, and yet it remains potentially limiting. While NRM is now established as the accepted nomenclature, other paradigms such as ‘new religious formations’ or ‘religious creativity’ can offer more inclusive parameters into which a set of beliefs may sit. While not wanting to digress into a debate on the merits of the term ‘NRM’, I will use it in this paper. Indeed, the church demonstrates many of the characteristics that define NRMs: charismatic leaders, social isolation, radically

⁵ Ibid. Page 145.

⁶ Shipps, J. (1985). *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press. Page x.

interpreting texts, millenarian beliefs and rejection of the secular world⁷. It was the New Testament Church's prolonged and well-publicised conflict with the state over their ownership of Mount Zion that caused the biggest increase to their public profile. At this time there were clashes between co-workers and representatives of the state but no reported deaths. Despite the church's professed opposition to mainstream society, they have never launched any physical attacks on it. Instead, they have undertaken propaganda campaigns of varying intensity, utilising media and public protests to spread their message. Aside from protesting during their six-year exile from Mount Zion, the New Testament Church has not done much to capture the public's imagination; in my research I have come across no mass suicides or reported cases of abuse. The purported wealth of NRM founders is often scrutinised and Bainbridge and Stark have promulgated the "entrepreneur model of cult innovation" whereby NRMs are formed as a commercial opportunity⁸. As seductive as it is to view the New Testament Church in this light—with its holy mountains, tropical island and organic food business—it must be remembered that both Kong and Hong could have earned considerable incomes in their previous respective occupations as movie star and pharmacist. It appears that a more accurate motivation, especially in the case of Hong who established Mount Zion, is an unyielding belief in the imminent and extreme transformation of the world – the apocalypse.

I will show how Mount Zion plays the central role in the New Testament Church's eschatology. While the New Testament Church has developed its own unique Mount Zion-centric millennial vision under the leadership of Hong, it demonstrates certain

⁷ Fox, J. (2005). New religious movements. *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. J. R. Hinnells. Abingdon, Routledge.

⁸ Bainbridge, W. S. and R. Stark (2003). Cult Formation: Three Compatible Models. *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader*. L. L. Dawson. Malden, Blackwell Publishing. Pages 63-66

aspects of a “crudely common physiognomy”⁹ that is found in other millennial groups. Rubinstein sees strong parallels between the eschatology espoused by Kong and the Dispensationalist schema adopted by many American Pentecostal denominations¹⁰. He summarises the church’s eschatology as the belief that a series of disasters will precede the Tribulation, at which point God will descend and members of the church will ascend into heaven during the Rapture. Following this, the millennial kingdom will be established on earth¹¹. Hong took Kong’s eschatology and made it particular to Mount Zion – God will now descend on His mountain in Taiwan. Catherine Wessinger’s typology of millennial movements offers a more useful schema for understanding the New Testament Church’s vision of the Tribulation, especially given the church’s turbulent relationship with authority and violent vision of the future. Wessinger shares Paul Tillich’s definition of religion as “ultimate concern” – “a concern which is more important than anything else in the universe for the person [or the group] involved”¹². She then proceeds to define millennialism as either catastrophic or progressive. In subdividing views of the millennium as either pessimistic, violent and destructive or optimistic and harmonious, Wessinger argues these definitions are not mutually exclusive¹³. The next trifurcation of Wessinger’s typology occurs when she distinguishes between “fragile groups that initiate violence to preserve their ultimate concern, ... groups that are assaulted because law enforcement agents regards them as dangerous (and) revolutionary millennial movements that possess theologies or ideologies that prompt

⁹ Faubion, J. D. (2001). *The Shadows and Lights of Waco: Millennialism Today*. Princeton, Princeton University Press. Page 103

¹⁰ Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). “The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community”. *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 459

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Wessinger, C. (2000). *How the Millennium Comes Violently*. New York, Seven Bridges Press, LLC. Page 15

¹³ Ibid. pages 16-17

believers to commit violent acts against enemies perceived demonic or subhuman”¹⁴. Importantly, like catastrophic and progressive groups, Wessinger believes more than one of these refined categories may also be used to describe a certain group at any particular time¹⁵. As a strongly catastrophic group, the New Testament Church will be shown to have displayed, or at least shown the potential to display, characteristics of these three categories at various stages during its history.

Methodology

There is a paucity of secondary material written in English about the New Testament Church. Given this, there were three main groups of sources that I accessed in researching this paper. The first source is the church’s website - <http://www.home.zion.org.tw>. It has many details about the contemporary Mount Zion as well as pamphlets, posters and other tracts available for download. The second group of sources were the books, pamphlets and posters that the church provided to me, especially Hong’s *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Thirdly, I spoke with church co-workers that I encountered both in Taiwan and in Australia. While my visits to Mount Zion were done before I had committed myself to a research topic, the conversations I had helped shape my initial understanding of the New Testament Church and Mount Zion. I also took many photographs while at Mount Zion. These proved to be a useful resource when writing my paper. In Australia, as noted in the preface, I was invited to attend a church service in Brisbane and visit their farm and temple at UNNS Ω. This provided an opportunity for me to clarify aspects of New Testament Church theology as well to see the church’s

¹⁴ Ibid. page 19

¹⁵ Ibid. Page 24.

consecrated land. Any personal information provided by church co-workers was given at their own behest and not because of my questioning.

While at Mount Zion I was told that the New Testament Church primarily uses the New King James version of the Bible so I have used that version during the research for this paper. Not all material provided by the church has been translated into English. Where an existing translation of a key term or place has been provided, I use it; otherwise the translations are my own.

Despite the openness and help provided by New Testament Church in preparing this paper, there remains one considerable obstacle to my research. In order to truly understand the tenets of the New Testament Church, they say one must be baptised in blood, water and spirit. The meaning of this baptism is explained later. However, I have not submitted myself to this baptism and therefore it could be argued that I cannot possibly truly understand and explain the teachings of the New Testament Church and the role of Mount Zion.

Unless specified otherwise, any reference to Mount Zion refers to Mount Zion in Taiwan.

Chapter 1

The meaning and role of Mount Zion in Judaism and Christianity.

I begin this chapter by examining the origins, history and role of the biblical Mount Zion. I then cover Taiwan's recent history and how the setting was created for the New Testament Church to establish itself. Special consideration is given to the era of Japanese colonisation and the recent rule of the KMT. Finally, I discuss four recent religious groups in East Asia that demonstrate similarities with the New Testament Church and its relocation of Mount Zion to Taiwan.

Mount Zion in Israel

The biblical Mount Zion is a spiritually important hill of modest size in suburban Jerusalem. The mountain has had religious significance for a range of traditions over the millennia. While this has led to varying interpretations of its role, there are certain characteristics that are shared between traditions. Mount Zion was recognised as a divine location when it was known as Mount Zaphon during the Canaanite era. This tradition lingered until King David captured Jerusalem and emphasised the importance of the mountain to the Israelites. This set of beliefs has come to be known as 'Zion theology'. In Zion theology, the mountain serves as both the place from where the descendants of David will rule and as the residence of Yahweh. As a term, 'Zion' demonstrates some flexibility and continues to be used to refer to a number of places and concepts.

The Mount Zion in Israel is generally considered to be a hill near the Old City of Jerusalem. This mountain is home to a mosque and a number of monasteries and cemeteries of varying Christian persuasions¹⁶, including King David's tomb¹⁷. The city of Jerusalem, and indeed much of Israel, has been subject to considerable physical and social change over the centuries, with temples, walls and roads being built, renamed, destroyed and rebuilt. The large numbers of ancient Canaanite and Old Testament sources that provide the basis for understanding this shifting landscape allow the accuracy of many key locations to be strongly contested. Various locations have been labelled as Mount Zion and it is therefore unclear if references to Mount Zion in the Bible and other literature consistently refer to the same spot in Israel. This uncertainty continues in modern Jerusalem, where Zion is sometimes used to denote the Temple Mount, even though Mount Zion itself is a separate physical entity¹⁸.

King David

King David first established the significance of Mount Zion in Judaism. On conquering the city, David made Jerusalem the capital of Israel and designated Mount Zion as the location for his Temple. This was the beginning of Zion theology. At the core of Zion theology are the beliefs that Jerusalem has been chosen by Yahweh to be the home for both Him and His people and that David and his

¹⁶

http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArtStEngPE.jhtml?itemNo=883869&contrassID=2&subContrassID=4&title=%27A%20sign%20points%20to%20the%20grave%20%27&dyn_server=172.20.5.5
 Accessed 1 October 2008.

¹⁷ Rose, P. (1973). *Window on Mount Zion*. London, W. H. Allen.

¹⁸ Levenson, J. D. (1985). *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. Minneapolis, Winston Press. Page 92.

descendents have been chosen to rule from Jerusalem. It will be shown that Hong has transposed these ideas to Mount Zion in Taiwan. Other aspects of Zion theology are the importance of the Jerusalem Temple; the position of the king as an intermediary between Yahweh and His people; and the ongoing protection of Jerusalem by Yahweh as being dependant on His being worshipped appropriately¹⁹.

David's son Solomon built the Temple on Mount Zion. This Temple served as a "symbol of transcendence" that encapsulates the "interpenetrating" relationship on Mount Zion between the heavenly and earthly realms²⁰. Richard J. Clifford regards Mount Zion as one of the most significant "cosmic mountains" in the continuum of beliefs from the Canaanite traditions to those of the Old Testament²¹. While not dominating the skyline, Mount Zion

is nonetheless called in the Bible the tallest mountain in the world, the place which God has chosen for his dwelling place, the place protected in a special way from enemies who can only stand at its base and rage, the place of battle where God's enemies will be defeated, the place where God dwells, where fertilizing streams come forth²².

This passage serves to illustrate the magnitude of the power attributed to Mount Zion. Zion theology has shaped the beliefs of its followers throughout the years,

¹⁹ Miller, J. M. and J. H. Hayes (1986). *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press. Page 203.

²⁰ Levenson, J. D. (1985). *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. Minneapolis, Winston Press. Page 142.

²¹ Clifford sees the transposition of characteristics from the Canaanite Mount Zaphon to the Hebrew Mount Zion as part of the process whereby the Hebrew Yahweh adopted characteristics of the Canaanite deity El. It is difficult to isolate the exact point when this transfer happened (Clifford, 1972: 140). The link between the two traditions should not be dismissed as coincidental, as the continuum from the Canaanite tradition to the Hebrew one has imbued Mount Zion with important divine traits. Whereas Yahweh, or at least the essence of Yahweh, dwells on Mount Zion, it is either of the Canaanite gods, Baal and El, who dwelt on Mount Zaphon. While acknowledging the conjecture on the precise location of Mount Zaphon, Hayes reiterates the link between the two traditions, especially with regard to the invulnerability of the mountain (1963: 426). He interprets the teachings of Isaiah to draw upon the Canaanite beliefs relating to Zaphon and highlights the importance of this in the creation of the Zion theology.

²² Clifford, R. J. (1972). *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. Massachusetts, Harvard University Press. Page 3.

particularly those in southern Israel. It was not adopted to the same extent by those in northern Israel, as the established dynasties there were less likely to accept the new tradition of the south, where the ruler had been designated by Yahweh to carry out His work²³.

Zion's other meanings

In examining Zion theology it is important to consider the different places and concepts that 'Zion' can refer to. Beyond the mountain itself, Zion is used to refer to a number of entities, including the nation of Israel. In the Psalms, use of the name is expanded to include:

Kingship and inviolability of Zion over against the nations; the site of the Lord's presence; simply a synonym of Jerusalem; place of liturgical worship; goal of restoration after the exile; place which the Lord has chosen; city which the Lord has founded²⁴.

This multitude of meanings introduces a degree of ambiguity to the word Zion. While the word may have been written down in a certain context, it can be reinterpreted in a number of ways, including those listed above. Even though there are specific meanings of Zion and Mount Zion that have been accepted for some time, it appears that these labels are malleable and can be utilised and understood to suit particular aims of the author or audience.

A later development in the concept of Mount Zion is the co-location of the Garden of Eden. Drawing upon the idea that divine waters spring from Mount Zion, Ezekiel 28

²³ Miller, J. M. and J. H. Hayes (1986). *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press. Page 235.

²⁴ Clifford, R. J. (1972). *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. Massachusetts, Harvard University Press. Page 141.

can be interpreted such that Eden is located on Mount Zion. In his discussion of Mount Zion as a cosmic mountain, Jon D. Levenson describes it as “a paradise in which the primal reality of creation survives intact, untarnished by the passing of time and unaffected by the threats of an aggressive chaos”²⁵. It will be shown that these are qualities shared by Mount Zion in Taiwan.

Mount Zion and revelation

Revelation is a common biblical tool, where the insight gained through the messages illuminates the relationship between humans and God. These events are important as they describe “God’s deliberate manifestation of his plans, his character, and himself”²⁶. The revelation itself may take one of a number of forms. It may be through divination, occurrences in the natural world, the casting of lots or, in the New Testament, when Jesus privately explains a parable to his apostles²⁷. Examination of the etymology of the word ‘apocalypse’ reveals that it originates from the Greek word for ‘revelation’²⁸. While stories about the apocalypse are only one type of revelation, the link between eschatology and revelation remains important when studying the traditional Mount Zion, especially given the mountain’s continuing role as the home of God.

²⁵ Levenson, J. D. (1985). *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. Minneapolis, Winston Press. Page 135.

²⁶ Nelson, W. B. (1993). Revelation. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*. B. M. Metzger and M. D. Coogan. New York, Oxford University Press. Page 649.

²⁷ Ibid. Pages 649-650.

²⁸ Collins, A. Y. (2000). *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*. Leiden, Brill. Page 6.

Roles of Mount Zion

The Psalms contain a number of revelations about the role of Mount Zion. As David is attributed as both the author of most of the Psalms and the protagonist in positioning Mount Zion at the centre of his kingdom, it is not surprising that his writing emphasises the power and sacredness of the mountain. In Psalm 132:13-18, Mount Zion is established as the eternal resting place of the Lord, a place where his anointed followers will be blessed. In Psalms 128:5 and 134:3 Mount Zion is designated as the location from where the Lord's blessings will spread forth. According to Donaldson, David reinforces these ideas in Psalm 47- *to the Chief Musician* and also describes Mount Zion "in cosmic terms as the source of the mythical river which brings fertility to the earth"²⁹. In 31:12 Jeremiah also paints Mount Zion as a place of material abundance. This is reflected in those who come to the mountain as, "Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden". Furthermore, Isaiah talks of the beauty of Mount Zion, saying that the Lord "will make her wilderness like Eden" (Isaiah 51:3). The idea of Mount Zion being a place of beauty and abundance is something that Hong and the New Testament Church have emphasised with Taiwan's Mount Zion. The book of Isaiah contains a number of further revelations about the role of Mount Zion.

In addition to reaffirming the aspects of Mount Zion mentioned in the Psalms, such as the centrality of the mountain and its offer of sanctuary, Isaiah describes it as the foundation from where the Lord will rise up (Isaiah 28:16-22). Just as Isaiah believes Mount Zion to be the base upon which the kingdom of the Lord will be built,

²⁹ Donaldson, T. L. (1985). *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*. Sheffield, JSOT Press. Page 39.

so too does he assert that it is inviolable and everlasting (Isaiah 33:20). Hong has applied these ideas of unflinching permanence to Mount Zion in Taiwan.

Taiwanese Context

The history of the New Testament Church over the last four decades and its development of Mount Zion must be seen in the context of Protestant Christianity's relatively recent introduction to Taiwan and the rapid changes that occurred in Taiwanese society during the twentieth century. While the New Testament Church has only existed in Taiwan during the Republic of China period, it is important to consider the evolution of the Protestant church in Taiwan under Japanese rule as well as events that occurred during the Qing dynasty. Despite a short period of growth during the 1960s, Christianity, including Protestantism, remains a relatively small religion in Taiwan. As a minority group acting on the fringe of the Protestant scene in Taiwan, other non-Christian groups dwarf the New Testament Church in terms of membership, wealth and influence. Beyond the Protestant churches in Taiwan, there are NRMs in East Asia with which the New Testament Church shares similarities in respect to their creation of a central sacred space. Several NRMs demonstrate a similar desire to the New Testament Church to reposition their chosen location as the spiritual centre of the earth. This has been a motivation for groups such as the Taipings in Qing dynasty China, Tenrikyo in Japan and the Unification Church in Korea. The Taipings, the Unification Church and the Eastern Lightning in China all believe that the Messiah will return in the East, a concept that is important in the New Testament Church's theology of Mount Zion.

Foreign influence

Taiwan has been subject to incursions by a number of foreign powers over the centuries. As a result, Taiwanese culture and religion continues to be a blend of both imported and indigenous factors. Despite Dutch missionaries establishing a community in southern Taiwan in the 1600s, the continuum from which the New Testament Church has evolved can be seen to have begun when British Presbyterian missionaries arrived in 1865. Over the following decades, British Presbyterians established a considerable presence on Taiwan, building churches, hospitals, schools and a seminary and publishing a weekly newspaper³⁰. However, the environment that the church operated in under the Qing dynasty was to change once Japan colonised Taiwan in 1895.

The Japanese ruled Taiwan from 1895 until 1945. Jones has identified three phases in their approach to regulating religion. The first phase, ending in 1915, was typified by “a paternalistic and laissez-faire attitude towards native religion”³¹ when few new ordinances aimed at religious groups were introduced. The second phase, from 1915 to 1937, saw a greater inclination by the Japanese to regulate Taiwanese religious groups and activities to mitigate the threat of dissent, a tolerance that was replaced in the years leading to, and during, the war by efforts to replace Taiwanese religions with Japanese ones³². The Japanese nationalist fervour that underpinned this third and last period, known as the *Kōminka* movement, led to the destruction of temples

³⁰ Rubinstein, M. A. (1991). *The Protestant Community on Modern Taiwan: Mission, Seminary, and Church*. Armonk, New York, M. E. Sharpe, Inc. Pages 18-19.

³¹ Jones, C. B. (2003). “Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period”. *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society*. P. J. Clart, Charles B. Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press. Page 19.

³² Ibid. Pages 24-28.

and the repression of clergy³³. Religious groups were to continue to face obstacles from the state once Taiwan emerged from Japanese colonisation and entered the Republic of China era under the rule of the KMT.

Christianity during the KMT period

Having retreated to Taiwan following the rise to power of the Communist Party and creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the KMT sought to reinforce its rule in Taiwan. To meet this objective the KMT restricted the opportunity for Taiwanese to engage in free speech and this limited the ability of religious groups to assemble³⁴. Such a move is not uncommon for Chinese rulers. Pittman B. Potter sees the relationship between the Chinese state and religion as one of constant challenge³⁵. The turmoil created by the exodus of the KMT and their supporters from China coupled with Taiwan's position between the competing ideologies of the United States and China meant that the state sought to minimise the possibility of social unrest, with religious groups in this context seen as potential incubators of subversive elements. However, Protestant churches did not suffer as badly as other religions during the KMT's crackdown, despite not being exempt from the rules. Eager to satisfy the United States, the KMT accommodated Western missionaries who had escaped from mainland China. From this starting point, the number of missionaries in Taiwan increased at a rapid rate. In spite of the increase in what could be seen as competition from the new foreign churches, existing Protestant

³³ Katz, P. R. (2003). "Religion and the State in Post-war Taiwan." *The China Quarterly* 174: 395-412. Page 401.

³⁴ Lu, Y., B. Johnson, et al. (2008). "Deregulation and the Religious Market in Taiwan: A Research Note." *The Sociological Quarterly* 49: 139-153. Page 141.

³⁵ Potter, P. B. (2003). "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China." *The China Quarterly* 174: 317-337. Page 317.

denominations in Taiwan such as the True Jesus Church and the Presbyterians experienced significant increases in their membership during the years up to 1965³⁶.

The KMT had begun to alter their approach to governance by the mid 1960s. Economic reforms were implemented which resulted in a reorientation of Taiwan's economy. The spoils of Taiwan's successful transition from a rural to an export-based economy were shared among the working and middle classes of both Taiwanese and Chinese immigrants³⁷. The religious landscape in Taiwan began to change in a way that reflected the increased wealth of the populace as donations to religious groups increased and the construction of new temples continued. Furthermore, the KMT was able to build on the colonial legacy of Japan by expanding and enhancing the infrastructure on the island.

There were a number of structural factors under the KMT's rule that contributed to the new role of religion in society. Daniel K. Jordan has identified these as "(1) increasing wealth, (2) specific differences in government policy from previous periods, (3) increasing education, and (4) increasing mobility"³⁸. The rise of the New Testament Church and their ability to position Mount Zion at the centre of their belief system is linked to Jordan's four factors – it is unlikely that the church would have been able to develop in the way that they have during another era in Taiwan's history. Mount Zion's transformation from a remote location in Taiwan's interior to one that is easily accessible by car is a prime example of this; better roads (both

³⁶ Rubinstein, M. A. (1991). *The Protestant Community on Modern Taiwan: Mission, Seminary, and Church*. Armonk, New York, M. E. Sharpe, Inc. Page 44.

³⁷ Hsiao, H. M. (1990). "Emerging Social Movements and the Rise of a Demanding Civil Society in Taiwan." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 24(July): 163-180. Page 164.

³⁸ Jordan, D. K. (1994). *Changes in Postwar Taiwan and Their Impact on the Popular Practice of Religion*. Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan. S. H. Harrell, Chun-chieh. Taipei, SMC Publishing Inc. Page 138.

public and private in the case of Mount Zion) and increased ability to purchase private transport has made the mountain a much easier location to visit. Similarly, the co-workers based there have fewer impediments to travelling to other places in Taiwan and around the world.

Other New Religious Movements

Of the many NRMs in East Asia, there are a number that possess key characteristics that are useful to consider when discussing Elijah Hong's relocation of Mount Zion from Israel to Taiwan. As "God's chosen Prophet in the East"³⁹, Elijah Hong has been able to use a combination of selected biblical passages and personal revelations from God to justify the new location of Mount Zion as His chosen place. The theme of a Messiah creating the holy land for all humankind occurs to varying degrees in other contemporary NRMs in East Asia, such as the Unification Church from Korea and the Church of the Almighty God, more commonly known as Eastern Lightning. An older, yet still pertinent, example is Hong Xiuquan, the messianic leader of the Taipings in Qing Dynasty China. Hong Xiuquan sought to create the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, a feat he felt he had achieved when his army captured Nanjing.

³⁹ Anonymous (2000). *God's Chosen Holy Mount in Taiwan, In the East!* (poster). Mount Zion, Chiah sien, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade.

Taipings

Hong Xiuquan (1814-1864) repeatedly failed to pass the imperial entrance examinations for a position in the bureaucracy. It was against this background of thwarted scholastic ambition that he experienced a series of profound yet confusing dreams, which prompted erratic behaviour of such a degree that his family thought he may be mad⁴⁰. During this period Hong Xiuquan dreamt of resting in Heaven with his father and brother after overcoming demonic foes. However, he was unable to make sense of his dream and its strong symbolism.

Hong Xiuquan's dreams remained uninterpretable until he came across the writings of the missionary Liang Fa. In reading Liang's commentary on the Bible, Hong grasped the meaning of his dream: that the father and brother he dreamt of were actually God and Jesus, and that he is therefore the Son of God⁴¹.

Following this revelation, Hong Xiuquan mobilised a "heavenly army" to attack the Qing dynasty and attempt to create a "heavenly kingdom". Using the prospect of gaining entry to the as yet unconquered (or for that matter undiscovered) heavenly kingdom to motivate his troops, Hong waged war against his opponents. Spence proposes the Taipings understood that "The Earthly Paradise is not just one place. It is the whole of China, wherever the Taiping Heavenly Army can reach the people and destroy the demons, so that all may live together in perpetual joy, until at last they are raised to Heaven to greet their father"⁴². Between 1853 and 1864 this

⁴⁰ Spence, J. D. (1996). *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*. New York, W. W. Norton & Company. Page 50.

⁴¹ Ibid. Page 64.

⁴² Ibid. Page 172.

paradise was centred in Nanjing. Hong Xiuquan stated “the establishment of the capital in Nanjing lays an everlastingly firm foundation. The capital is called the Heavenly Capital in accordance with Heaven’s mandate, and our country is called the Heavenly Kingdom in consonance with God’s will”⁴³. Beyond these divine assertions, Nanjing was also suitable for more tangible purposes, such as its imposing city walls and nearby agricultural abundance⁴⁴. Elijah Hong and the New Testament Church employ similar language to Hong Xiuquan in explaining their Mount Zion: “The New Testament Church will always be firm and ... Mount Zion shall never be moved”⁴⁵.

Eastern Lightning

Eastern Lightning is a Christian group that originated in Henan Province in China and one that also demonstrates similarities with the New Testament Church. Believing that Jesus has taken the form of a middle-aged peasant woman, Eastern Lightning seeks to establish the Kingdom of God in place of the Chinese Communist Party⁴⁶. This strong anti-government stance has led to Eastern Lightning being designated by the Communist Party as an “evil cult”⁴⁷. Eastern Lightning draws its authority from the book of Matthew: “For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (24:27, New International Version). This is interpreted by Eastern Lightning to mean that their

⁴³ Ibid. Page 180.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Page 180.

⁴⁵ Photo of sign in Mount Zion History Museum taken by author on 12 January 2008.

⁴⁶ Kindopp, J. (2004). “Fragmented yet Defiant: Protestant Resilience under Chinese Communist Party Rule”. *God and Caesar in China*. J. H. Kindopp, Carol Lee. Washington D.C Brookings Institution Press. Page 141.

⁴⁷ Dunn, E. C. (2008). ““Cult,” Church, and the CCP: Introducing Eastern Lightning” *Modern China* Online(August): 1-23. Page 2.

teachings will spread from China (in the East) to Western nations⁴⁸. Reading the gospels in this way allows Eastern Lightning to tailor the words, written millennia ago in a totally different culture, to their situation in modern day China. Despite the important role that the new Jesus has in spreading the gospel to the world, she has never been photographed and lives in seclusion⁴⁹. The New Testament Church also place strong emphasis on the 'East', carefully choosing quotations from the Bible to justify God's new prophet living in Taiwan and the spread of God's teachings across the world⁵⁰.

Unification Church

The Reverend Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church shares the view of the New Testament Church and Eastern Lightning on where the new Messiah will come from. In his interpretation of the Bible, the *Divine Principle*, Reverend Moon writes that the Messiah must be born in the East sometime between 1917 and 1930⁵¹. He did not explicitly state in the 1973 translation of the *Divine Principle* that he is the Messiah, instead waiting until 1992 to make the public declaration of his divine status⁵². Despite this lag, many of Moon's followers assumed him to be the Messiah. One of the roles of the Messiah in Unification Church theology is to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. In performing this role with his bride, the Messiah, or Third Adam as he is known, will be fulfilling the task left incomplete by Adam and

⁴⁸ Dunn, E. C. (2008). "Contesting Orthodoxies on the Chinese Protestant Web." *Asian Studies Review* 31(4): 447-458. Page 448.

⁴⁹ Forney, M. (2001). "Jesus is Back, and She's Chinese". *Time*. New York, Time Inc.

⁵⁰ Anonymous (2000). *God's Chosen Holy Mount in Taiwan, In the East!* (poster). Mount Zion, Chiahsien, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade.

⁵¹ Barker, E. (1984). *The Making of a Moonie*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd. Page 82.

⁵² Lewis, S. (2004). "The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church)". *New Religions: A Guide*. C. Partridge. New York, Oxford University Press. Page 72.

Eve and then by Jesus⁵³. The New Testament Church shares this ideal of creating a heaven on earth as they have attempted to achieve this on Mount Zion. It is not only East Asian Christian NRMs that have attempted to transmute an earthly place into a heavenly kingdom or imbue an otherwise mundane location with spiritual qualities.

Tenrikyo

Tenrikyo is an indigenous Japanese NRM. The followers of Tenrikyo have actually built the city of Tenri, a place that is “the sacred center of the world and the place of ultimate human origins, so the place where grace and blessing flow most freely”⁵⁴. While Tenri currently functions as both a modern city and as a pilgrimage destination for Tenrikyo adherents, it also has a role to play in the future. Tenri is built around the *kanrodai*, an object that will excrete dew signalling that Tenrikyo is now the religion of all people⁵⁵. While the New Testament Church does not claim that Mount Zion had any role in the creation of the earth, like Tenri it is considered a beacon to which people of all nations shall return.

It has been shown that Mount Zion is a long-standing and spiritually significant location. The characteristics of Mount Zion in Israel should be considered when analysing Mount Zion in Taiwan, in particular its role as a link between heaven and earth, its beauty that is isolated by chaos and its centrality in the future coming of the Lord. That the New Testament Church has been able to develop in Taiwan in the manner that it has is a result of Taiwan’s recent history. The New Testament

⁵³ Moon, S. M. (1974). *The New Future of Christianity*. Unification Church International. Page 124.

⁵⁴ Ellwood, R. S. J. (1982). *Tenrikyo: A Pilgrimage Faith*. Tenri, Oyasato Research Institute.

⁵⁵ Miller, D. (2004). “Tenrikyō”. *New Religions: A Guide*. C. Partridge. New York, Oxford University Press. Page 222.

Church is not alone in attempting to create a spiritual centre in East Asia. Other groups have done this, empowering a place so that it becomes either a destination for people to return to or a source of teachings and truth. Mount Zion in Taiwan performs both of these roles.

Chapter 2

History of the New Testament Church

I begin this chapter by examining the early history of the New Testament Church. The protagonists Kong, Hong and Cheung are discussed in the context of Mount Zion and the roles that they played in its genesis. I proceed to discuss key components of the New Testament Church's theology as well as the most important revelations experienced by the church's leaders. Having established the circumstances that led to Hong settling on the mountain and centring the church there, I then discuss what is often portrayed as its most traumatic experience – six years of exile from Mount Zion. Finally, I analyse Hong's argument for Mount Zion and the role that the mountain will play during the Tribulation.

Kong

Sis. Kong (Jiang Duanyi or Kong Duen Yee; 1923-1966) founded the New Testament Church in 1963 and shaped its strong anti-authoritarian stance during her short period as leader. After her death in 1966, Kong's daughter Ruth Cheung took over control of the church. She remained in this role until 1976 when Elijah Hong successfully challenged her authority and vision of the church. Hong had joined the New Testament Church during Kong's visit to Taiwan in 1966, three years after he had left the Assembly Hall Church and also three years after he first claimed the mountain that would later be named Mount Zion.

Prior to returning to Christianity and forming the New Testament Church, Kong lived the colourful and sometimes sordid life of a Hong Kong movie diva known as Mei Qi. As recounted in her major work, *A Living Testimony to the Truth*, Kong's life before she returned to Christianity was hedonistic and flamboyant. Having experienced financial and familial difficulties in her youth, Kong had moved from Shanghai to Guangzhou and then to Hong Kong, where she became a movie star as a teenager. Following a period of illness in 1957, Kong sought solace in Protestant Christianity, the religion into which her mother had her baptised some years earlier. By 1959 she had retired from the movie industry and was devoted to her new life as a preacher. Kong offered a blunt assessment of her time in the movie industry, writing that before she found the mercy of Jesus Christ, she "was a sinner of sinners, spending half my life in the pit of sin and suffering"⁵⁶. Kong's Holy Spirit baptism in 1961 did not result in an instantaneous transformation. After attempting and failing to receive spirit baptism at a local charismatic service, Kong went home disappointed. However, later that night she returned home from work exhausted and started speaking in tongues⁵⁷.

Having being baptised in the Holy Spirit, Kong felt she became a vessel for it and this was manifested through her newfound ability to speak in tongues and the powerful visions she began experiencing⁵⁸. In spite of her terminal tongue cancer and other illnesses, Kong was thoroughly invigorated by the Holy Spirit. This energy allowed her to preach in Hong Kong for a number of years before beginning

⁵⁶ Kong, D. Y. (1996). *A Living Testimony to the Truth*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 288.

⁵⁷ Ibid. Pages 376-377.

⁵⁸ Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). "The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community". *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 449.

missionary activity in South East Asia. This activity was directed from Hong Kong, where she established the New Testament Church in 1963⁵⁹. Kong's effort in spreading the truth of blood, water and spirit was aided by the formation of the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade (GJCC). The GJCC's tasks include:

demolishing all Christian denominations, heresies and false doctrines; uniting all children of God in the truth; crushing idols and false gods within the so-called religious sphere; revolutionizing and destroying all atheistic sciences, technologies and cultures; wiping out all forms of intoxication created by mankind; leading all nations back to the one and only true God and Savior Jesus Christ; and turning all creation back to God to enter God's kingdom for the commanded blessings⁶⁰

The militant tone demonstrated here illustrates the catastrophic millennium envisioned by the church. It indicates that the New Testament Church would be, to use Wessinger's typology, a group that has the potential to initiate violence to achieve their ultimate concern. While the GJCC may have achieved their aims within the church, the broader society remains afflicted with hindrances such as the worship of false idols and atheistic technology and culture. The GJCC still exists today and is responsible for publishing the New Testament Church's books, pamphlets and posters.

Kong preached in Singapore and Malaysia, attracting both interested crowds and the suspicion of local authorities, which were wary of her vehemently anti-authoritarian position. In declaring the authority of the Heavenly kingdom over man-made kingdoms, Kong's preaching did not find a willing audience in local governments,

⁵⁹ Kong, D. Y. (1996). *A Living Testimony to the Truth*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 446.

⁶⁰ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/index.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

and on occasion she was hounded from regions where she was deemed to be a nuisance or a threat⁶¹.

Kong arrived in Taiwan in late 1965 to help solve spiritual problems that had developed in the recently established branches of the New Testament Church. Her mission was short in length, only seven days, but was to have a profound effect on the direction taken by the New Testament Church over the coming decades. By this stage Kong's tongue cancer was advanced and she was only able to talk with great pain. Despite her inability to preach verbally, Kong still attracted followers to sessions held in Taipei, Tainan and Kaohsiung. One of the curious Taiwanese Christians to attend her teachings was a pharmacist who had recently set about realising his dream of creating an earthly home for the Heavenly Lord. The meeting between Kong and the man who was to be known as Elijah Hong was to be one of the most significant events in the history of the New Testament Church.

Hong

Hong Sanqi (192? —) was a Christian of strong faith who was not affiliated with any church when he first met Kong in 1965. In 1963 he had left the branch of the Assembly Hall Church that he led⁶² because he felt God telling him that the denominations, or man-made organisations, failed to adequately transmit His teachings as expounded in the Bible and were ignorant to the Holy Spirit⁶³. Instead of languishing in the perceived Babylon of man-made organisations, Hong felt

⁶¹ Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). "The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community". *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 450.

⁶² Ibid. Page 451.

⁶³ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Pages 4-5.

directed to follow the Holy Spirit to a new home. With his determination set, Hong and some of his fellow members left the Assembly Hall Church and went on a journey to find “the mountain which God would show us”⁶⁴ to become His spiritual centre of testimony. Access to the mountains of Kaohsiung County was still limited due to poor infrastructure at this time, so Hong and his colleagues had considerable difficulty in navigating their jeep up the riverbed to the mountain town of Hsiaolin. After the unsatisfactory experience of initially settling down on the riverbed, Hong and one of his fellow pioneers, John Chang, went on an expedition to find a more suitable place and were drawn towards a particular mountain. Both Hong and Chang were immediately awe-struck by the new mountain when they saw it and were imbued with a sense that this was to be the new home for both themselves and the Lord⁶⁵. Hong experienced an important revelation on the first night that he slept on the mountain which he has since strongly paralleled to Jacob’s experience as recalled in Genesis 28:10-22. In this passage, Jacob sleeps on a stone pillow on his trip from Beersheba and dreams of a ladder descending from heaven. God spoke to Jacob, reassuring him:

“Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know *it*.” And he was afraid and said, “How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!”

Genesis 28:15-17

Believing that he was re-enacting Jacob’s night in Luz, Hong pledged to the Lord that the mountain was a gateway to heaven and to the home of the Lord and that they were waiting on the mountain for him to show them a new prophet⁶⁶. This event is

⁶⁴ Ibid. Page 5.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Page 6.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Page 8.

commemorated on the altar at the focal point of the modern-day mountain, El Zion.

The western side of the altar is inscribed with the following:

And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things as Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that his people may know that You are the LORD God, and that you have turned their hearts back to You again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice,... Now when all the people saw it they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!"

(1 Kings 18: 36-39)

Under the rule of evil kings, the Israelites of the past did not know the true God. At that time, the prophet Elijah restored the altar and offered the sacrifice. God answered him with heavenly fire. The Israelites then knew that the LORD God was the heavenly God and that Elijah was the true prophet.

Today, Prophet of All Nations Elijah Hong (the latter Elijah) has returned to Zion, restored the altar, and offered the sacrifice. The LORD God has also answered him with heavenly fire. This last generation should know that the LORD God is the one and only true God and that Elijah Hong (with the GJCC) who does all these things at God's word is the true prophet.⁶⁷

Besides the parallels with Jacob's night spent in Luz, Hong's first night on Mount Zion can be seen to have an additional meaning. The cycle of day and night represents the ongoing flow of yin and yang with connotations of rest and restoration⁶⁸. Therefore, Hong's first night on Mount Zion can be seen to have spiritual meaning in both Christian and Chinese cultural contexts. This experience vitalised Hong and strengthened the determination of his vision for Mount Zion. It is important to note that it would be some years after Hong and Chang first stayed on the mountain before it was re-named Mount Zion.

⁶⁷ These passages are written on the altar at El Zion in Chinese. The text above is from the English translation on the altar at UNNS Ω in Queensland.

⁶⁸ Fan Lizhu, J. D. Whitehead, et al. (2006). *Religion in the Late Modern World*, Current Affairs Press. Page 232.

Early years on Mount Zion

The early of years of settlement on Mount Zion were challenging for the pioneering Christians. Hong and his fellow residents experienced problems with their neighbours and the local government, as well as bearing the hardships that are inherent in settling a remote and previously uninhabited area. The efforts of Hong and his colleagues to develop agriculture were frustrated by environmental problems and a general lack of farming know-how. Hong supplemented the meagre income of the community by operating a pharmacy at the base of the mountain. During this period the settlers remained unattached to any particular church. In 1965 one of Hong's colleagues (and future fellow apostle and leader of the New Testament Church), Caleb Kuang, urged Hong to visit Kong who was in Taiwan and through whom "God was seeking for lost sheep"⁶⁹.

Hong was not initially convinced by Kong's doctrinal position. He was sceptical of the spiritual authority held by the recently reformed and terminally ill former movie star and rejected the organisation represented by the New Testament Church. Nevertheless, Hong was deeply moved by Kong's preaching and shared a pivotal moment with her. During a foot-washing ritual, Kong laid her hands on Hong, leading him to experience a profound spiritual transformation. Hong wrote

I could feel how she hoped that my conceited mind and natural concepts would be shattered by God that I would be renewed by Him in the same way as she had. Lastly, she leaned on me. Though she was silent, I could feel very deeply that she was sacrificing her whole being to serve and care for me... The ever binding love of the Lord filled my entire being abundantly through the sacrificial ministration of His handmaiden⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 17.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Page 20.

Hong was fortunate that a photographer captured this experience. The importance of these photos is emphasised in their caption in Hong's major work, *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*: "CONTINUATION OF REVIVAL! TRANSITION OF MISSION! CHANGE-OVER OF ERAS!" (See Figure 3)⁷¹. Rubinstein identifies these images as being important tools in asserting Hong's legitimacy as the leader of the New Testament Church during the leadership struggle with Ruth Cheung during the 1970s⁷².

Cheung

Kong returned to Hong Kong shortly after meeting with Hong. Back in Hong Kong, Kong's illness intensified and she died in August 1966. Before her death, Kong entrusted her eldest daughter, the 21 year old Ruth Cheung, with stewardship of the New Testament Church. As a child, Cheung lived with her father, Kong's ex-husband. She returned to live with Kong at the age of 13 and during her teenage years Cheung stubbornly resisted her newly reformed mother's preaching. It was not until Cheung suffered an acute bout of measles that she joined her mother in faith. During her illness, Cheung responded to Kong's prayers, repented to the Lord and was filled with the Holy Spirit. This was a great relief to Kong, who wrote, "Thank the Lord! This rebellious daughter who despised and ignored me has now been

⁷¹ Ibid. Page 5 of picture section.

⁷² Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). "The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community". *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 450.

given to me by the Lord as my dearest co-worker”⁷³. Kong was also thankful to God for Cheung’s pledge to stay single and be only betrothed to Christ⁷⁴.

Cheung made some important contributions to the New Testament Church during the early years of her leadership. She accompanied Kong on her visit to Taiwan in 1965 and stayed in the country after her mother returned home in 1966. In 1966 Cheung bestowed Hong’s as yet unnamed mountain with the title ‘Mount Zion’⁷⁵. Not only did she perform this important task, Cheung also granted Hong the name ‘Elijah’⁷⁶. Despite these significant contributions, Cheung is now considered by the New Testament Church to be an apostate and she only appears briefly in their published material.

Struggle between Hong and Cheung

Despite her work in leading the New Testament Church, Cheung was considered by Hong to begin departing from her mother’s direction within three years of inheriting control. Contrary to her earlier professed vow of spinsterhood, Cheung married a gentleman named Tan in 1969, and in Hong’s eyes, this was when her decline began. A quote attributed to Cheung appears in the GJCC pamphlet *Defending the Truth*. In it she says

Since we regard ourselves as the true church established by the master builder, a special people chosen of God and His witnesses in this era, and

⁷³ Kong, D. Y. (1996). *A Living Testimony to the Truth*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 388.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Page 418.

⁷⁵ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 44.

⁷⁶ Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). “The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community”. *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 451.

claim that we possess truths which others do not, we feel superior. We isolate ourselves from others and blow our own trumpets. As a result, we do not learn from others. We only boast of ourselves, criticize others, and even mock other children of God. Moreover, we condemn them harshly⁷⁷.

It became obvious to Hong that in addition to seeking to reach out to other denominations, Cheung had forsaken the complete truths of blood, water and spirit and therefore had strayed from the original teachings of Kong. Hong claims that Cheung and Tan “lost the sanctified, righteous and evil-hating life, the power of the Church and the strength to fight which were all so prevalent in Sis. Kong’s time. Consequently the NTC fell into a terrible 7-year desolation”⁷⁸. He goes on to write that the New Testament Church in Taiwan suffered financially during this period and Cheung even suggested to Hong and his colleagues that they should not force themselves to manage Mount Zion. While this upset Hong, he was more concerned with the way that Cheung was shepherding the New Testament Church away from Kong’s original vision.

Hong and one of his key co-workers (and other future apostle and leader of the church), Victor Pi, returned to Taiwan in late 1975 believing that they were following the directions provided by God. Hong proceeded to preach forcefully at the church’s Winter Convention in February 1976 and made an offering to God. God’s happiness at this offering was apparent when “the heavenly fire descended to consume all our iniquities, weaknesses, doubts, sluggishness, sickness... It empowers us to hold fast the vision of revival as we strove on. This Winter Convention was a very decisive one; one in which the Holy Spirit revealed the

⁷⁷ Anonymous (1993). *Defending the Truth*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 16.

⁷⁸ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 26.

minister to everyone and fortified our foundation to cope up with the great spiritual tremor which the NTC was to encounter”⁷⁹.

This tremor was manifested in a letter from Cheung written in April 1976. In the letter she denounced Kong’s teachings and offered a new revelation. Hong writes that Cheung instructed an “apostate co-worker” called Chow to take control of the New Testament Church in Taiwan⁸⁰. Chow’s efforts were met with resistance from the church’s members, some of who shouted for Hong to remain steadfast in his control.

Hong believes his position as the new prophet of the New Testament Church was sealed on Mount Zion on 24 September 1976. In a revelation that church members now refer to as 9.24, Hong was moved by the Spirit of God to proclaim “On 9.24 this day, you will be established. You should erect tablet and rebuild the NTC”⁸¹. Having successfully marginalised Cheung within the Taiwanese branch of the church, Hong was set to spend the rest of the decade convincing the foreign branches of his divine authority and building up a community on Mount Zion. Holding divine authority has long been a characteristic of Chinese rulers. This mandate was held so long as the ruler and his line “served faithfully and successfully in their duties” which were generally state rituals⁸². Holding the mandate of God is something that Hong has constantly used to defend his position and justify his authority. One instance that is highlighted by the GJCC occurred at the New Testament Church worldwide summer convention in 1977. At this event, “Bro. Elijah Hong preached

⁷⁹ Ibid. Page 28.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid. Page 30.

⁸² Jochim, C. (1986). *Chinese Religions*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall. Page 144.

about Ezekiel and called for workers of the era. God sent heavenly fire to confirm His servant's ministry (please watch the video tape)"⁸³. When watching the tape, one can see flashes of red appear on the right side of the film⁸⁴. This could be fire sent by God or it could be the result of over exposure on the film. Either way, 30 years later the New Testament Church continues to use this as evidence of God's endorsement of Hong.

Theology of New Testament Church

Kong initially established the New Testament Church's theological position and it has not been radically changed in the following four decades. Hong was able to assert his spiritual authority by claiming to remain loyal to Kong's interpretation of Christianity, in contrast to the perceived apostasy offered by her daughter Cheung. The New Testament Church has been built to continue the work of Jesus' apostles and to complete the restoration begun by Martin Luther. Kong claims that because Luther "wasn't an apostle that he could not preach the truth on building the church"⁸⁵. Instead, this restoration is directed by the apostles of the modern era, such as Kong, Hong, Pi and Kuang, all of whom have been recognised by God and therefore hold unquestionable authority. Unlike the 'denominations', the other Christian churches that it so fiercely attacks, the New Testament Church does not see itself as a 'man-made' organisation. Rather, it is made 'of' men, with Christ serving as the foundation and the members being the bricks. Members of the Church must accept the baptism of BWS – blood, water and spirit. It is useful to consider the baptism of

⁸³ Anonymous (2000). *God's Chosen Holy Mount in Taiwan, In the East!* (Poster). Mount Zion, Chiahhsien, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade.

⁸⁴ *New Testament Church Gospel Series*. Taiwan, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade: 57 minutes.

⁸⁵ Hong, E. (2001). *Building the Church*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 30.

BWS, apostleship and the concept of the church as interrelated rather than separate concepts, as none holds any meaning in isolation from the others. Beyond these theological starting points, there are several key prophecies that are mobilised by the New Testament Church to assert the role of Mount Zion.

In many ways Kong was very inexperienced when she founded the New Testament Church in 1963. Fresh out of her movie career, she had only returned to Christianity in 1957 and was not formally trained in the gospels or as a preacher. Kong's unconventional and novel background led to many people viewing her preaching with a degree of scepticism. Despite this, Kong managed to develop her small church, spreading from Hong Kong to Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan. Her theology was marked by a stark dichotomy. According to Kong, "There are only two groups of people in this world – one belonging to God, the other to the devil"⁸⁶. Kong outlined the ways through which people could belong to God in her preaching and writing. Her method relied heavily on the word of God as it is written in the Bible, with no regard for other interpretations or developments that had occurred in the time since the gospels were written.

Blood, water and spirit

The most fundamental tenet of the New Testament Church is receiving the baptisms of blood, water and spirit, referred to by the church as BWS. Originally emphasised by Kong, this belief remains at the core of the New Testament Church's teachings

⁸⁶ Kong, D. Y. (1996). *A Living Testimony to the Truth*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 6.

and is an essential requirement for all co-workers to enter the church and to become part of the foundation upon which the church is built.

The first baptism is the Witness of Blood. This is a process of reconciliation rather than a literal baptism. Kong writes that in receiving this baptism “We must beseech God to forgive us our sins and cleanse us with the precious blood of His Son Jesus Christ. We should also give ourselves to God and fully believe in His promise”⁸⁷.

The second baptism is the Witness of Water. This baptism requires the participant to be fully immersed in water. Receiving the witness of water signifies one’s death, burial and resurrection with Christ and a willingness to live according to the word of God⁸⁸. Pi expands on the role of water baptism, writing that not only does it represent an undertaking to abide by the truth, it “also means obeying the apostles’ doctrines our whole life, submitting to the apostles’ leading, and, together with the saints, being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets and coming to the unity of the faith”⁸⁹.

The third baptism is the Witness of the Holy Spirit. This baptism involves the participant speaking in tongues, which in the New Testament Church is done by producing sound similar to “Da da da da”. While on a normal conversational level

⁸⁷ Kong, D. Y. (2000). *How to Be a Genuine Christian*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 1.

⁸⁸ Kong, D. Y. (1996). *You Shall Be Baptized with the Holy Spirit*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 3.

⁸⁹ Pi, V. (1996). *The Truth on Water Baptism*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Pages 4-5.

this sound makes very little sense, when done properly “it is a prayer uttered by the Holy Spirit through us, and God understands it”⁹⁰.

Apostleship

The concept of apostleship is also very important in the organisation of the New Testament Church. Elijah Hong stresses the importance of apostles in the church, and by doing this, positions himself as the ultimate spiritual authority from whom co-workers receive direction. In his tract, *Apostleship*, Hong articulates the New Testament Church’s view of apostleship. Chosen by Jesus Christ, an apostle is believed to hold the highest ministry in the church and to provide the central leadership of the church. Importantly, Hong notes “Those who are not apostles cannot lay the foundation of the Church nor build the Church”⁹¹. In declaring that leadership of the New Testament Church can only be held by those with the God-given authority to do so, Hong has centralised organisational power within himself and his fellow apostles. Rubinstein writes that this requirement for obedience towards the apostles, as first demonstrated by Kong, is an appropriation of the Confucian ideal of filial piety⁹². Members of the New Testament Church who are not apostles are referred to in the literature as co-workers. Hong claims that his apostleship was manifested in 1968 and the apostleship of Victor Pi and Caleb Kuang was revealed some time later. As the channel through which God communicates his message, the apostles of the New Testament Church control the way in which the Church conducts itself and attempts to grow. This is an important

⁹⁰ Kong, D. Y. (1996). *You Shall Be Baptized with the Holy Spirit*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 9.

⁹¹ Hong, E. (1984). *Apostleship*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 19.

⁹² Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). “The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community”. *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 457.

role, as the discipline directed by the leaders of a group, in this case the church's apostles, must remain inclusive enough so that members are attracted whilst being able to exclude disruptive elements⁹³. The apostleship of individuals has been transmitted through revelations.

7.21

Revelations made to the leaders of the New Testament Church are another central aspect of the Church's theology. The first key revelation was made at a convention in the southern Taiwanese city of Tainan on 21 July 1966 and is therefore referred to by the Church as 7.21. While Kong was in Hong Kong at the time and was to pass away less than one month later, she revealed the identity of the three apostles in what would become controversial circumstances. One of the Church's co-workers, Chou, was disappointed that he was not revealed as an apostle and subsequently left to form his own church⁹⁴. While Chou missed out on becoming an apostle, the literature published by the New Testament Church does not reveal the identity of the successful apostles. The Church regards 7.21 as the moment when an earlier prophecy of Kong's was fulfilled. In 1964, Kong foresaw that "The great revival of 1966 will begin from the Isle of the East"⁹⁵, something that was deemed to have occurred when the three apostles were revealed in Tainan. At no time did Kong specify that the 'Isle of the East' was Taiwan. Hong summarises the meaning of 7.21 in *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God* (which was published on 21 July 1983, that is, 7.21.83) as "The Holy Spirit rebuilds the NTC and demolishes the denominations;

⁹³ Stark, R. (2003). *Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail: A Revised General Model*. Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader. L. L. Dawson. Malden, Blackwell. Page 264.

⁹⁴ Hong, E. (1984). *Apostleship*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 41.

⁹⁵ Hong, E. (2001). *Building the Church*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 133.

the full Gospel of BWS shall spread from the East to the West to lead all nations back to the NTC – flow to the Mountain of the Lord’s House, and await the Lord’s coming”⁹⁶. As demonstrated earlier, other East Asian NRMs, such as the Unification Church and Eastern Lightning, also place ‘the East’ as the source from where the truth will come. The New Testament Church celebrates the anniversary of this prophecy each year during the Feast of Tabernacles. The festivities are in praise of the reconstruction of the New Testament Church as the house of God⁹⁷

9.24

The second prophecy that is important for the New Testament Church is 9.24. On 24 September 1976 on Mount Zion, Hong was inspired by the Holy Spirit to declare “On 9.24, this day, you will be established. You should erect tablet and rebuild the NTC”⁹⁸. This prophecy was used to justify the expulsion of Cheung and Tan and shift control of the church from them to Hong. Kong also experienced a revelation that involved the numbers 9.24. In 1965 Kong spoke in tongues and it was understood from this that on 24 September 1966 signboards would be erected on the places where the truth of the Holy Spirit had been revealed. Events transpired such that the signs were erected as predicted and local churches were built⁹⁹.

The numbers 9.24 and 7.21 hold considerable significance for the New Testament Church. Some of the GJCC’s publications incorporate these auspicious numbers into the date of publication.

⁹⁶ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 25.

⁹⁷ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/englsih/zion/festival/right.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

⁹⁸ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 30.

⁹⁹ Ibid. Page 64.

UNNS

A more recent revelation used by the New Testament Church and one that is highlighted on many of their new publications, hymns and other material is UNNS. Elijah Hong experienced this revelation on 1 January 1997 while on the New Testament Church's Eden Isle in Tahiti. This short revelation is strongly eschatological, drawing upon the symbolism of Revelation 19 where the Lord defeats the beast and the armies of Babylon. Hong has revealed that God will shortly conquer the kingdoms of man and that people can return to Eden (meaning Mount Zion and the New Testament Church) to enjoy God's blessings¹⁰⁰. Posters emblazoned with 'UNNS' feature prominently at the New Testament Church's premises at Mount Zion and in Queensland.

Exile

Having gained control of the Church and established the community on Mount Zion, it appeared that Hong was in a good position to shepherd the New Testament Church from its unsettled past to an era of growth. However, Taiwan was about to experience another period of social instability, typified by police clamping down on the pro-democracy demonstrations of the Kaohsiung incident in December 1979. Rubinstein points out that this was an unfortunate time for the New Testament Church¹⁰¹. As events unfolded in Kaohsiung, the Church experienced a simultaneous

¹⁰⁰ Photograph of signboard on Mount Zion taken by author on 12 January 2008.

¹⁰¹ Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). "The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community". *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 452.

crack down on their community on Mount Zion. Church publications claim that a dispute over the legal right to tenancy on Mount Zion was the cause of this conflict. Unfortunately for the New Testament Church the stand off over the land rights on Mount Zion was to last until 1986.

Legal issues

The dispute between the New Testament Church and the state was apparently over the legal right to the land on which Mount Zion was located. Prior to being named Mount Zion, the area was known as Shuanlienku. When the local Household Office initially zoned Mount Zion in 1968, it was included in the village of Hsiaolin. The residents were issued with papers that recognised this¹⁰². In July 1977 the land on Mount Zion itself was rezoned to Sanmin township while the dwellings built upon it were considered to remain in Hsiaolin. The New Testament Church claims that the mountain was then secretly further rezoned as a ‘restricted mountain area’, thereby requiring residents to apply for mountain permits if they wished to travel to and from Mount Zion. The residents began to experience increased bureaucratic interference with regard to their claim to the land that was now simultaneously located in two separate townships and classified as a restricted mountain area¹⁰³.

The New Testament Church initially pursued legal means to solve the dispute over the rights to Mount Zion. Co-workers claimed that the regulations governing restricted mountain zones provided that “Plain dwellers who have lived more than three years on the mountains are allowed to continue living in the mountainous

¹⁰² Liu, J. (1984). *The Most Outrageous Injustice of the 20th Century*. Hsiaolin, The scattered people of Zion. Page 7.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

area”¹⁰⁴. The church also found support for their case in the courts. A summary of the Administrative Court’s finding on 1 April 1980 is provided in *The Most Outrageous Injustice of the 20th Century*. In addition to instructing the Household Office to revert the housing registrations on Mount Zion from Sanmin to Hsiaolin, the court agreed that members of the New Testament Church had been occupying Mount Zion for more than 10 years and had a legal right to reside there¹⁰⁵.

Pro-democracy movement of 1979

The displacement of the New Testament Church from Mount Zion coincided with the pro-democracy movement that rocked Taiwan in 1979. Rubinstein accurately observes that Elijah Hong exercised poor judgement in settling on Mount Zion at the same time as the nascent democracy movement unsettled the KMT¹⁰⁶. On 10 December 1979 the KMT arrested reformist leaders and activists who had gathered in central Kaohsiung to support International Human Rights Day¹⁰⁷. The riot that resulted from the police intervention is referred to as the ‘Kaohsiung Incident’. The Kaohsiung Incident was followed by “a period of relative suppression

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. It is not clear if this is linked to the program of land reform undertaken by the Taiwanese government in the decades following World War II and if this justification applies to the New Testament Church’s claim to Mount Zion. Seeking to strengthen their support among Taiwanese peasants, the KMT conducted a program of land reform between 1948 and 1953. The stages of reform were “compulsory rent reduction, the sale of public land to actual tillers, and the compulsory sale of private land to actual tillers” (Ho, 1978:159). While this occurred a decade before Elijah Hong first set foot on Mount Zion, the intent of this reform, to prevent rural unrest, may have informed the regulation that the New Testament Church used to assert their ownership of Mount Zion. Ideally, by allowing squatters to attain legal rights to land, the government could minimise the possibility of rural unrest while increasing the agricultural productivity of the land.

¹⁰⁶ Rubinstein, M. A. (1991). *The Protestant Community on Modern Taiwan: Mission, Seminary, and Church*. Armonk, New York, M. E. Sharpe, Inc. Page 145.

¹⁰⁷ Rigger, S. (1999). *Politics in Taiwan: Voting for Democracy*. London, Routledge. Page 117.

that afforded no opportunity for vocal expression of dissident views”¹⁰⁸. It was in this climate that the New Testament Church found itself exiled from Mount Zion.

New Testament Church removed from Mount Zion

By early 1980 the settlement of people living on Mount Zion had grown to include 12 families. It would not be long before government forces displaced the burgeoning community. On 1 May 1980 police removed the residents of Mount Zion from their homes on the mountain. Prior to this, police and other government officials had made delegations to the mountain, and members of the Tan and Liu families had either been arrested or lured down from the mountain under false pretences, such as being drafted for military service¹⁰⁹. According to the church there were rumours circulating that Mount Zion “resembled a people’s commune. Others spread rumours that Mt Zion possessed an ‘underground armory’”¹¹⁰. The KMT’s suspicion of the church as a dangerous organisation satisfies one of Wessinger’s criteria for a catastrophic millennial group¹¹¹. In light of the Kaohsiung incident it is not surprising that a group that overtly rejects the authority of the state—such as the New Testament Church—would be scrutinised. However, the force with which the government dealt with the residents of Mount Zion was considerable. By late May 1980, less than six months after the Kaohsiung incident, all residents had been removed from Mount Zion.

¹⁰⁸ Wachman, A. M. (1994). *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*. Armonk, New York, M. E. Sharpe. Page 141.

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous (1986). *KMT's 20-year persecution on NTC*. New York, Church of New York. Pages 22-23.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Page 8.

¹¹¹ Wessinger, C. (2000). *How the Millennium Comes Violently*. New York, Seven Bridges Press, LLC. Page 19.

Suddenly homeless, three of the families from Mount Zion found shelter in the pigsty of a sympathetic Christian in the nearby village of Shihserliao¹¹². The church members dwelled at the pigsty from May 1980 until the census date in late December 1980 when, following the requirement for citizens to return to their homes, they attempted to return to Mount Zion. Upon reaching the base of Mount Zion the group was denied permission by the authorities to climb the mountain for the census. However, they were allowed to set up camp in the riverbed that skirts around the base of the mountain¹¹³. For the next 6 years this would be closest that the co-workers would get to residing on Mount Zion.

The battle waged by the New Testament Church to regain possession of Mount Zion testifies to the strength and conviction of their devotion to the mountain. The Tan and Liu families had sold their possessions and moved to Mount Zion in 1967. They were the mainstays of the New Testament Church's enterprise in developing the mountain from unoccupied forest to a rudimentary yet functioning farm. The passion that these families had for Mount Zion was expressed in one of the pamphlets produced by the church during their struggle for ownership of the mountain:

Zion has certainly become the core of their life and purpose of living. To them: To lose Zion is to lose life! Without Zion, life would be meaningless and worthless!¹¹⁴

Church members were steadfast when given the opportunity by the authorities to transfer their place of residence away from Mount Zion. In *The Most Outrageous Injustice of the 20th Century*, they stated that they would "rather endure the bitterness

¹¹² Anonymous (1986). *KMT's 20-year persecution on NTC*. New York, Church of New York. Pages 22-23. Page 23.

¹¹³ Liu, J. (1984). *The Most Outrageous Injustice of the 20th Century*. Hsiaolin, The scattered people of Zion. Page 13.

¹¹⁴ Anonymous (1986). *KMT's 20-year persecution on NTC*. New York, Church of New York. Page 22.

of wandering”¹¹⁵ than give up the legal right to reside on Mount Zion. This determination was demonstrated repeatedly over the years.

The years spent in exile were unsettling for the residents of Mount Zion. On 31 August 1982 police and intelligence officers destroyed the tents Mount Zion’s exiles had erected on the riverbed. The tents and their inhabitants had survived “eight killer floods” prior to this incursion but were no match for the force of the law¹¹⁶. Over the next three years the exiles from Mount Zion stayed on the riverbed, seeking shelter under even flimsier constructions, such as umbrellas. The police did not leave them alone during this time. Eight members of the Tan and Liu families and two associates spent 7 months in prison and Elijah Hong was convicted of fraudulent representation¹¹⁷.

Climax and clashes

The stand off between the New Testament Church and the state reached a climax in April and May 1986. At this time there were bloody clashes between members of the New Testament Church and the police as the exiles attempted to return to Mount Zion – the incident that occurred on 10 March 1986 was on the seventh anniversary of Hong permanently settling on the mountain. The church managed to film some of the skirmishes and has since used the footage extensively in propaganda material. The campaign to raise awareness and support for the New Testament Church was conducted worldwide, with the church even placing advertisements in the *New York*

¹¹⁵ Liu, J. (1984). *The Most Outrageous Injustice of the 20th Century*. Hsiaolin, The scattered people of Zion. Page 21.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Page 21.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Page 43 and Anonymous (1986). *KMT's 20-year persecution on NTC*. New York, Church of New York. Pages 26-27

*Times*¹¹⁸. The church pitched their plight as a human rights struggle where the exiles from Mount Zion were the only refugees in Taiwan¹¹⁹. Some of the images captured at the clashes and used in the campaign, such as that of a young bespectacled woman bleeding from a head wound, continue to be used in New Testament Church material and were still prominently displayed on signboards on Mount Zion in early 2008 (see Figure 4).

Fortunately for the New Testament Church, a resolution was brokered with the assistance of Chu Haiyun of Academia Sinica in 1987¹²⁰. The exiles from Mount Zion were able to return to their home in 1986¹²¹. Since then the New Testament Church has been able to exist on Mount Zion with little interference from the government. Nevertheless, in December 2007 a spokesman from the church told me that the legal issues surrounding ownership remain unsolved. While the New Testament Church's ownership of the land is no more certain than it was in the past, they have not experienced any problems with the state similar in scale to those of the early 1980s.

Hong's argument for Mount Zion

The New Testament Church's belief that Mount Zion is now located in Taiwan is not shared by other Christian or Jewish traditions. That a long established and globally

¹¹⁸ Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). "The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community". *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 453.

¹¹⁹ Liu, J. (1984). *The Most Outrageous Injustice of the 20th Century*. Hsiaolin, The scattered people of Zion. Page 1.

¹²⁰ Rubinstein, M. A. (1991). *The Protestant Community on Modern Taiwan: Mission, Seminary, and Church*. Armonk, New York, M. E. Sharpe, Inc. Page 146.

¹²¹ Anonymous (1989). "March of the Cross". *Asiaweek*. Hong Kong, Asiaweek Limited. 15.

recognised holy place such as Mount Zion could move half way around the world is an easily contested idea and one that the church has had to continually defend. In doing so they have drawn upon a range of Bible passages, prophecies and revelations and spliced these together in an attempt to justify the spiritual relocation of Mount Zion from the Middle East.

God has a vessel and a place

Elijah Hong strongly believes that God chooses a prophet for each era and that prophet is appointed to a designated place. In Hong's understanding, God

must first gain a vessel and a place. On our part, our hearts must also conform to this principle; inclining towards the vessel ordained by Him and the place appointed by Him¹²².

This belief is fundamental in Hong's claim to a spiritual entitlement to Mount Zion. Beyond any legal claim that the New Testament Church has due to time accrued on the mountain, it is the claim that God has chosen Hong as his vessel and that His place is Mount Zion in Taiwan that underpins the Church's claim to Mount Zion.

Hong is able to find examples of the relationship between God, His vessel and His place in the Old Testament. Using Solomon's speech where he declares that God chose David to rule the Israelites from Jerusalem (II Chronicles 6:6) as the basis, Hong then proceeds to place himself and Kong on a continuum that begins with the prophets of the Old Testament – Abraham, David, Solomon and Elijah. Hong understands these key biblical figures to have been granted the holy lands of Canaan, Jerusalem, Mount Moriah and Bethel respectively. The precedent of God's chosen

¹²² Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 117.

prophet and consecrated place aligning in an era means “God’s Will shall be made even clearer”¹²³. This tradition remained dormant until God raised up Kong to revive the New Testament Church.

In raising up Kong as his prophet and apostle, God brought her to the “original land” - the fifth floor of 120 of 7 Soares Avenue, Hong Kong. According to Google Maps, Soares Avenue is in the district of Kowloon, about 500 metres south east of the Mong Kok Mass Transit Railway station¹²⁴. Co-workers told me that the original apartment where Kong lived and held services has since been demolished, however the site remains a pilgrimage destination, as does her grave that is also in Hong Kong. Once, while Kong was overseas, a co-worker acted without her approval and moved the church from the apartment on Soares Avenue to a nearby location on Argyle Street. Attempting to continue from the new and non-chosen location proved to be very difficult, with Kong undergoing “seven months of spiritual battles” as “God’s sacred work came to a standstill”¹²⁵. In May 1962, 20 to 30 people normally attended prayer meetings held at Soares Avenue¹²⁶. The ‘original place’—the apartment on Soares Avenue— appointed to Kong by God is markedly different from the mountain appointed to Hong.

¹²³ Ibid. Page 116.

¹²⁴ “Soares, Ave Hong Kong” on maps.google.com.au accessed on 16 August 2008.

¹²⁵ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 120.

¹²⁶ Kong, D. Y. (1996). *A Living Testimony to the Truth*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 387.

Kong's prophecy of a mountain

A key prophecy used to justify the movement of Mount Zion was made by Kong in 1964, one year after Hong had laid claim to the mountain. Hong recalls in *This Man and This Mountain* that Kong foresaw that

A wonderful revival shall come upon the earth as from 1966 onwards. This flow of revival shall issue from the NTC (Mt. Zion) God is established in the isle of the East (Taiwan) to the end of the earth. The Lord of all hosts shall hasten this according to His time¹²⁷

This prophecy contains elements of the 7.21 prophecy and a similarly worded version is found in other GJCC publications, such as the poster *Behold! God's chosen Prophet in the East! Holy Mount in Taiwan!* Kong did not specify Mount Zion and Taiwan in her original prophecy and these locations have been inserted into the passage later.

Using Kong's 1966 prophecy as a starting point, Hong has crafted a narrative to demonstrate the legitimacy of God's recent choice of Taiwan as the location for His mountain. Quoting Matthew 23:37-39, the Church has asserted "The Mt Zion in the Mid-East has been rejected by the Lord Jesus Himself"¹²⁸. Not only has Jesus rejected Mount Zion in Israel, the New Testament Church believes that the people of the Middle East have rejected Jesus. Because Taiwan's Mount Zion has been revealed to a prophet—Elijah Hong—and Israel's Mount Zion has not, "It is a foregone conclusion that God has rejected the Mid-East Mt Zion and has chosen the mountain in Taiwan to be Mt Zion"¹²⁹. Furthermore, God's ability to perform miracles on Taiwan's Mount Zion, such as shining light from the body of the praying

¹²⁷ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 4.

¹²⁸ Anonymous (1986). *KMT's 20-year persecution on NTC*. New York, Church of New York. Page 5.

¹²⁹ Ibid. Page 5.

Elijah Hong, healing the ill who travelled to the mountain and punishing those who stole from the mountain also add to the spiritual power and authenticity of the mountain¹³⁰.

Parallels between Hong and Old Testament

Hong finds parallels between his own experiences and those of the Old Testament prophets to strengthen his link to Mount Zion. Hong was given the name 'Elijah' by Cheung and he is still able to find great significance in the name. Hong begins *This Man and This Mountain* by transposing God's words as recorded in Malachi 4:5-6 to the modern era:

In the last days, God shall send Elijah the prophet to the world. The sending of Elijah is the key point deciding whether man's heart can be turned or whether the earth will remain accursed. In other words, if the latter-day Elijah does not come, the heart of man shall never be turned and the whole world shall remain accursed¹³¹

Hong refers to the latter-day Elijah throughout *This Man and This Mountain* and in other material published by the GJCC. A more recent pamphlet, *Defending The Truth*, explicitly states the link between Hong and Mount Zion in Taiwan: "the latter-day holy mount was revealed to the latter-day prophet, Elijah Hong, who is the latter-day Elijah"¹³². Hong has positioned himself as God's prophet, who will act as a beacon and draw people to Mount Zion as the Tribulation draws closer. In a sermon delivered in September 1977, Hong talked at length on the challenges faced by the biblical Elijah and how he triumphed due to his steadfast faith¹³³. Hong draws a strong parallel between the challenges faced by the biblical Elijah and those faced by

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 1.

¹³² Anonymous (1993). *Defending the Truth. Mount Zion*, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 28.

¹³³ Hong, E. (1977). *The Mantle of Elijah*. Pages 36-45.

the New Testament Church. He entreats the co-workers to stay true to the tenets of the church and to “imitate the spirit and power of Elijah”¹³⁴.

Hong felt an affinity with other figures of the Old Testament when God drew him to Mount Zion. At this stage Hong was not aligned with any particular church and claimed that God directed him to a place where he would wait for His messenger. In heading to Mount Zion, Hong felt directed by God to behave like the prophets of the Old Testament: “He wanted me to have the faith of Abraham to walk on a completely new way, to lead a pastoral life like Isaac, and much more, to have the spirit of Jacob in treasuring birthright and blessing”¹³⁵. While his efforts in establishing Mount Zion demonstrate these qualities of Abraham and Isaac, it is Hong’s emulation of Jacob that is important in the creation of Mount Zion in Taiwan. This is especially evident in Hong’s experiences during his first night on Mount Zion.

Eschatology

Elijah Hong and the New Testament Church have developed a strong eschatological narrative around Mount Zion. While the GJCC has published much about Mount Zion, it is difficult to find a succinct description of the role that the mountain will play at the Tribulation. However, there are various pieces of writing that can be pulled together to illustrate the church’s eschatology in a coherent manner. It is best to begin by noting that the New Testament Church continues to promulgate Kong’s vision of the Tribulation. Material available on the church’s website warns that “An unprecedented great Tribulation, which is the last of its kind, will take place after the

¹³⁴ Ibid. Page 45.

¹³⁵ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 5.

church is caught up” and that “When saints are called up in the air to meet the Lord in the air, the great Tribulation will begin on earth”¹³⁶.

In examining the New Testament Church’s eschatology, it will be useful to take one of Elijah Hong’s sermons and analyse the meaning that he imbues it with. In October 1994 the church convened a global co-workers convention that travelled around their various settlements in Malaysia. Part of the significance of this gathering lay in the fact that it was the first time since Hong gained control that the church’s co-workers from all over the world had come together. Hong’s teachings are therefore part of his attempts to reinforce his vision of the New Testament Church.

The second venue that the convention attended was the New Testament Church’s own Mount Carmel in Malaysia. Like Mount Zion in Taiwan, this Mount Carmel has been re-named by the church. Upon arriving at Mount Carmel, Hong proclaimed how the New Testament Church has been chosen by God to lead the revival that will see the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of God. Hong finished this short speech by declaring

The gospel of the heavenly kingdom will be preached throughout the world in no time. The end will come soon. Our Lord Jesus Christ will descend in glory. The glorious NTC will be fully adorned and caught up into glory, to attend the marriage of the Lamb, and to enjoy the commanded blessings. We render all glory, love, praises, kingdom and power to Him forever and ever. Hallelujah (12 times)! Amen.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Kong, D. Y. (1997). *Glorious Christ is Coming Soon* (poster). Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade.

¹³⁷ Hong, E. (1994). *Vessels Who Bring the Dawn of Salvation*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 9.

Through examination of the passage it is possible to isolate key aspects of the New Testament Church's eschatology.

Impending apocalypse

Firstly, there is the rapidly impending apocalypse. Hong has once again taken the opportunity to declare that the end of days is going to occur soon, and that this event will be marked by the glorious descent of Jesus Christ. Victor Pi also emphasises the imminent return of Jesus Christ, directing readers of the *Truth on Spirit Baptism* to Revelations 22:7, where Jesus announces that He is returning shortly and those who keep the prophecy of the Book of Revelations will be blessed¹³⁸.

Rapture

Secondly, this passage refers to the Rapture that will occur as part of the apocalypse. The 'glorious NTC' that Hong refers to are the co-workers and apostles that comprise the church, as they are the foundation and bricks upon which the New Testament Church is built. In discussing the development of the church-built road up to Taiwan's Mount Zion, the Way of Zion, Hong states it has been constructed "for all nations so that they may flow to the Mountain of His House and obtain the hope of Rapture"¹³⁹. In its tract *Defending the Truth*, the New Testament Church writes that Mount Zion "is the holy mountain where the chosen and faithful companions of the Lamb will stand with him" and then refers to a passage in the Book of Revelation 17:14 - "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for

¹³⁸ Pi, V. *The Truth on Spirit Baptism*. Mt Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 73.

¹³⁹ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 93.

He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful". The church uses this passage to represent its ongoing struggle against the man-made kingdoms of Babylon and that the climax of this battle will occur when the New Testament Church and the Lamb are raptured into heaven. The willingness to engage in such a battle shows how the church further satisfies Wessinger's category of catastrophic millennial groups¹⁴⁰. In answering a question about the fate of non-believers, Victor Pi refers to Revelations 21:8, writing "But the cowardly, unbelieving; shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"¹⁴¹. This violent end stands in stark contrast to the fate of the co-workers of the New Testament Church, who will have ascended to eternal life in heaven. In Revelations 21:2 it is written that after the Tribulation "... I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband". A representative of the New Testament Church explained to me that they understand this reference to 'New Jerusalem' to mean Mount Zion in Taiwan.

Lamb

The image of the Lamb is the third key passage in Hong's speech that is important in understanding the New Testament Church's eschatology. During the Global Co-workers' Convention in Malaysia in 1994, Hong drew upon John 1:29 to explicitly state that Jesus is the Lamb of God¹⁴². The New Testament Church frequently portrays itself as having a very close relationship with the Lamb. In an attempt to

¹⁴⁰ Wessinger, C. (2000). *How the Millennium Comes Violently*. New York, Seven Bridges Press, LLC.

¹⁴¹ Pi, V. (1978). *The Witness of Blood*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade.

Page 12.

¹⁴² Hong, E. (1994). *Vessels Who Bring the Dawn of Salvation*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 45.

demonstrate the authenticity of their vision as the true church and defending against their perceived persecution, the Church writes “the NTC is treading on the path of the Lamb, and the denominations are pursuing and killing the Lord Jesus”¹⁴³.

The Church’s unity with the Lamb is possibly given its most intimate depiction when the New Testament Church is described as being the bride of the Lamb. As Hong stated at Mount Carmel in 1994, the New Testament Church will “attend the marriage of the Lamb” when Jesus descends. This image originates in Revelations 21:9-11. In this passage, John is visited by an angel who promises to show him the bride of the Lamb, whisking him away to a high mountain where he sees Jerusalem in the light of the glory of God. Kong drew upon this image when she declared that “The New Testament Church is a chaste virgin, the bride of the Lamb and the glorious spiritual house”¹⁴⁴. In more contemporary times, the church writes

as long as the church remains imperfect, she must continue to be edified and perfected by the spiritual ministers; such as apostles, prophets and others whom God appoints in the church. The church will need them until she has attained the stature of the fullness of Christ, and has become a well-adorned bride ready for the marriage of the Lamb¹⁴⁵.

The imperfection referred to here is the continuing existence of other Christian groups. While other Christian denominations were still an ongoing problem in 1993, Hong and his co-workers had felt differently at the end of the 1970s, when they “had a strong feeling that the last trumpet would soon be blown and the saints would soon be raptured”¹⁴⁶. In experiencing this, they “were reminded of the imminent glorious

¹⁴³ Anonymous (1993). *Defending the Truth*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 7.

¹⁴⁴ Kong, D. Y. (1996). *You Shall Be Baptized with the Holy Spirit*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 24.

¹⁴⁵ Anonymous (1993). *Defending the Truth*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 22.

¹⁴⁶ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 145.

manifestation of the 144,000 people purchased from the earth, standing with the Lamb on Mt. Zion”¹⁴⁷.

In correspondence with New Testament Church co-workers I was told that Hong warns them against falling into the temptation of the devil and sinning as this may result in them not being caught up in the imminent Rapture. Co-workers who adhere to the truths of blood, water and spirit but are not on Mount Zion will still be taken up in the Rapture from wherever they are at the time. This is pertinent with regard to co-workers who live and work on the New Testament Church’s consecrated land on the ‘offshoots of Zion’ or elsewhere around the world.

Dispensational

The New Testament Church’s vision of the Tribulation can be further understood when placed into an eschatological schema. In his reading of Kong’s vision of the Church, Rubinstein considers the New Testament Church’s premillennialist eschatology to be dispensationalist¹⁴⁸. Important aspects of dispensationalism include salvation by faith, literal interpretation of the Bible, the importance of Israel to God and the fulfilment of prophecies at the time of the millennium¹⁴⁹. Rubinstein notes that this set of beliefs is shared by a large number of Pentecostal churches in the United States. The New Testament Church displays all of these characteristics. As has been mentioned, maintaining faith in the truth of blood, water and spirit is essential for co-workers to be saved at the Tribulation. The literal interpretation of

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). “The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community”. *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 459.

¹⁴⁹ Erickson, M. J. (1999). *A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books. Pages 110-119.

the Bible is fundamental to the church's belief in Mount Zion and the role that it will play in the Tribulation. As will be discussed later, contemporary activities undertaken on Mount Zion, such as agriculture and education are also very strongly based in the literal interpretation of the Bible. Interestingly, while the New Testament Church believes that God has forsaken the Middle East, they consider themselves to be "spiritual Israelites"¹⁵⁰ and have essentially recreated significant physical aspects of Israel and Jerusalem on Mount Zion in Taiwan.

Mount Zion is central to the New Testament Church's conception of what will occur during the Tribulation. Having gained control of the New Testament Church, Hong has been able to expand the church's key beliefs to include a role for "God's chosen place" – Mount Zion. The years leading up to the church's return to Mount Zion in 1986 were undeniably turbulent. The resilience, faith and single mindedness demonstrated by the apostles and co-workers has continued from this period of exile into the current era. Mount Zion has grown in the years since the church returned and is now an established and vibrant spiritual centre.

¹⁵⁰ Anonymous (2000). *God's Chosen Holy Mount in Taiwan, In the East!* (Poster). Mount Zion, Chiahsien, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade.

Chapter 3

The modern Mount Zion

Hong's community, and now the New Testament Church, have been established on Mount Zion for four decades. Despite the obstacles that they have had to overcome, church members have been able to develop a reasonably large and thriving settlement on the mountain. There is a range of day-to-day functions that occur on Mount Zion, largely removed from the view of mainstream Taiwan. If the New Testament Church was not in possession of Mount Zion or some similar base, then it is unlikely that they would be able to perform their operations as easily as they have been able to since returning in 1986. The mountain is home to 300 people¹⁵¹ and serves as a pilgrimage destination for the co-workers of the New Testament Church who live elsewhere in Taiwan and around the world. Mount Zion contains venues that are designed for worship – both on a daily basis and for special occasions. It also includes a number of farming plots, orchards and animal pens. The church has developed a school—Eden Homestead—that caters for children who live on Mount Zion and for co-workers' children from other parts of the world. This combination of functions, coupled with Mount Zion's turbulent history, has created a public profile for the church in Taiwan. The New Testament Church has attempted to capitalise on this interest by developing tourist infrastructure on the mountain. In

¹⁵¹ Wang, M. (2007). "A New Eden On Mt. Zion". *Taiwan Panorama*. Taipei, Taiwan Government Information Office 16 November 2007.

developing Mount Zion as a physical home for the New Testament Church, co-workers have also built up the mountain as a spiritual home. A number of landmarks have been installed over the years and many of these are imbued with spiritual significance. The spiritual power of Mount Zion is not limited to the geographical boundaries of the mountain in Taiwan; the ‘offshoots of Zion’ throughout the world share in this power.

Examining the physical environment that has been developed there over the years is the best way to begin a discussion of the contemporary Mount Zion. As the scene for the ever-nearer Tribulation, Mount Zion obviously has a well-defined role to play in the future. However, it also serves a very strong purpose in the present—as a spiritual and physical home to the New Testament Church—while at the same time acting as a museum that commemorates the pioneer spirit of the early settlers who held strong to Hong’s vision. A recurring theme on Mount Zion is the combination of God and nature and the transformation that this can engender in visitors to the mountain. The Church’s website emphasises the mutuality of these two concepts:

Holy Mount Zion chosen by God is different from any secular tourist attraction. Its realms of Eden are of unadulterated beauty and bliss. While basking in its perfection of beauty, visitors will be inspired by God’s surpassing work and abundant grace. Should such inspiration lead to the knowledge of the true God, the trip will be worth it. We sincerely hope that all visitors will meet and accept God here, and join the saints in enjoying God’s commanded blessings¹⁵².

¹⁵² <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/tour/right11.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

Places of note on the modern Mount Zion

Cherubim gate

Those who approach Mount Zion from the south will first be aware of its presence when passing through the town of Jiashian. There are road signs directing visitors north up Highway 21 to Holy Mount Zion. Having arrived at the base of the mountain, visitors are first confronted with a large stone placed on the right of the mountain path. The stone is emblazoned with the gold characters ‘錫安山’ and subtitled with ‘Holy Mt. Zion’ (see Figure 5). Just beyond this stone is the large white Cherubim gate (see Figure 6). Two cherubim praying over the top of Mount Zion cap the gate which “instills a sense of awe as if one has met the angelic guards”¹⁵³. Cherubim are acknowledged as having several roles, including guarding the entrance to Eden¹⁵⁴. As will be discussed later, the New Testament Church considers Mount Zion to be, among other things, the Garden of Eden. The base of Mount Zion is approximately 250 metres above sea level¹⁵⁵.

Zion’s Stronghold/Triumph Hall/Heavenly Pond

The road climbs sharply from the gate for several hundred metres. About half way up to the main compound, the road skirts around the top of Zion’s Stronghold, an imposing retaining wall made of rocks caged in wire (see Figure 7). According to

¹⁵³ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/tour/right.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Burke, D. G. (1993). “Cherub, Cherubim”. *Oxford Companion To The Bible*. B. M. Metzger and M. D. Coogan. New York, Oxford University Press: 107-108.

¹⁵⁵ 張發誠 (1995). *The Construction of the Spatial Meaning of Mt. Zion in Taiwan*. Taipei, National Taiwan University. Page 127.

the representatives of the New Testament Church who guided me around Mount Zion, Zion's Stronghold was built to prevent the river from eroding Mount Zion and was done without any assistance from organisations outside the church. Zion's Stronghold took 6 months to build and is 60 metres tall and 120 metres wide¹⁵⁶. This structure has its origins in 1 Chronicles 11:5, where there is a reference to "the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David)". Proceeding on past Zion's Stronghold and beyond a car park and light industrial areas, the visitor will reach an elevation of approximately 710 metres above sea level and arrive at the Triumph Hall. This building contains a gift shop where products of Mount Zion and other New Testament Church farms can be purchased. There is also a small television viewing area where church films are shown. Adjacent to the Triumph Hall is the Heavenly Pond (see Figure 8). The Heavenly Pond was dug by hand over 77 days in 1973, filled by rainfall and then stocked with fish¹⁵⁷. According to Hong, the pond earned its 'heavenly' title because people were surprised to see such a large pond at a high altitude. Once the pond was completed, Hong and the co-workers went for a swim, where they "felt so harmonious in the spirit, mind and body (and) were flooded with God's gracious care and presence!"¹⁵⁸. This is a powerful example of nature, as embodied on Mount Zion, acting as a conduit to a state of being that is closer to God.

Victory Hall

The Victory Hall is located next to the Heavenly Pond and the Triumph Hall. The top floor of this building serves as a museum of the New Testament Church and

¹⁵⁶ Wang, M. (2007). "A New Eden On Mt. Zion". *Taiwan Panorama*. Taipei, Taiwan Government Information Office 16 November 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Photo of sign in Mount Zion History Museum. Taken by author on 12 January 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 52.

Mount Zion, with posters and artefacts used to tell the stories of Kong, Hong, the church and the mountain. The lower level of the Victory Hall contains two sections accessible to the public: one that houses more posters that detail the history and work of the church and one that is a large dining area (see Figure 9). The dining area caters for both co-workers and guests and can seat 1,000 people¹⁵⁹. The food served is generally produced on Mount Zion. The construction of the Victory Hall was delayed because of the co-workers' degenerate nature – Hong described them as “not faithful enough, not patient enough, and not diligent enough”¹⁶⁰ to complete the job on time. Such scolding indicates that Hong requires the co-workers to exercise discipline in serving God.

Truth triumphs over despotism

Continuing around the Heavenly Pond, the next point of interest is Truth Triumphs Over Despotism. This memorial contains the twisted remains of the chimney funnel and lookout platform of the Church's ship M.V. EXODUS that was erected in the riverbed during the New Testament Church's exodus in the early 1980s. Hong and the Church's co-workers had viewed the Paul Newman film *Exodus* and believed that “God showed us through this film that the M.V. EXODUS of the Jews in the ‘40s had once appeared in the Mediterranean, but the M.V. EXODUS of the true Jews in the ‘80s has now appeared in Hsiaolin riverbed. All who go on board this ship are warriors who shall fight to death”¹⁶¹. The M.V. EXODUS represented the

¹⁵⁹ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/tour/right04.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

¹⁶⁰ Hong, E. (1994). *Vessels Who Bring the Dawn of Salvation*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 87.

¹⁶¹ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 150.

New Testament Church's "unwavering vow to return to Zion"¹⁶² (photo from Mount Zion). The only parts of the ship that were visible were the chimney funnel and lookout platform. Bulldozers crushed the ship, along with the rest of the riverbed settlement, in August 1982. The funnel, conveniently mangled in such a way that it resembled a small dinghy, was placed atop a pile of rocks and the church was able to continue to 'sail towards Zion', or as it was written on the chimney – '面向锡安力前' (see Figure 10). The remains of the M.V. Exodus are now installed on Mount Zion "to testify that Truth Triumphs over Despotism!"¹⁶³.

David Citadel

Not far from 'Truth Triumphs over Despotism' and overlooking the Heavenly Pond is the David Citadel. The David Citadel was built using locally sourced materials and its stone foundation gives "the structure a sense of strength and steadfastness"¹⁶⁴. As dwellings were gradually built when the Church returned to the mountain in the 1980s, Hong claims to have been the last resident to move from a tent to a building. At the urging of the co-workers, it was the David Citadel that Hong moved into, but only after all the co-workers had moved from tents into more permanent shelter¹⁶⁵. It should be noted that the David Citadel does not include any enclosed spaces and Hong would have been exposed to the elements while dwelling there. Flying above the David Citadel is the New Testament Church's flag – the Ensign of All Nations (see Figure 11).

¹⁶² Photo of 'Truth triumphs over despotism' taken by author on 12 January 2008 at Mount Zion.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/tour/right05.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

¹⁶⁵ Hong, E. (1994). *Vessels Who Bring the Dawn of Salvation*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 98.

Ensign of all nations

Elijah Hong designed the Ensign of All Nations in 1981 while he lived in the Hsiaolin riverbed. The Ensign is “a victorious banner of truth raised by the Lord of all hosts. It is also the commanding banner of God’s messenger, and the crusade banner of the GJCC. Its contents embody profound spiritual significance and signs”¹⁶⁶. These significances and signs include the prophecies of 9.24 and 7.21 and depictions of God’s messengers bringing His word to the world and “a great crowd of witness of faith thronging back to Zion in victory”¹⁶⁷.

Forest Bath Sidewalk / Dawnlight Tree House / King’s Pavilion / Zion Tree House

Walking up the forest bath sidewalk, the guest to Mount Zion will pass a series of small buildings. The Dawnlight Tree House and the King’s Pavilion are halfway houses on the path up to El Zion and the main temple. Another small house, Zion Tree House, is located next to El Zion (see Figure 12). While Mount Zion is well defined as a Christian sacred place for the New Testament Church, the Zion Tree House acts as a portal into a further realm, one of the transcendent natural power of the mountain. This tree house is a symbol of the strong emphasis placed on the purity of nature by the Church, as “Visitors who climb up there feel free and out of this world as they become one with nature”¹⁶⁸. The transformation from a secular state of mind to one that is in tune with nature and with God is further emphasised at El Zion.

¹⁶⁶ Photo of sign in Mount Zion Victory Hall taken by author on 12 January 2008.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/tour/right10.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

El Zion

El Zion is the epicentre of Mount Zion's spiritual power. It is situated approximately 800 metres above sea level. The peak of the mountain is some distance further up and is approximately 1030 metres above sea level¹⁶⁹. El Zion is located on the south-central fringe of a large grass clearing that is flanked by the Zion tree house, Holy Temple, Christ is the Rock and the Tent of Shem. El Zion acts as a focus for this part of the mountain, and given its spiritual importance, a location that is not unprecedented in the context of traditional Chinese temple geography. Jochim wrote "in a typically religious way, the spatial center is also the most important and holy place"¹⁷⁰. As will be demonstrated, El Zion is the most important and holy place on Mount Zion, and indeed, in the entire New Testament Church.

El was one of the Canaanite Gods who may have resided on the Canaanite precursor to Mount Zion in the Middle East - Mount Zaphon. In his study of Canaanite deities Roberts notes that El also means "the most high"¹⁷¹. However, Hong appears to apply the prefix 'El' in a different manner. While it was Cheung who named the mountain 'Zion', Hong "named Mt. Zion as **El-Zion** (the God of Mt. Zion)"¹⁷². It does not appear that El-Zion is a new name of Mount Zion; materials produced by the Church and the GJCC constantly refer to it as 'Mount Zion'. El Zion is only used to refer to a particular point on the mountain.

¹⁶⁹ 張發誠 (1995). *The Construction of the Spatial Meaning of Mt. Zion in Taiwan*. Taipei, National Taiwan University. Page 127.

¹⁷⁰ Jochim, C. (1986). *Chinese Religions*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall. Page 100.

¹⁷¹ Roberts, J. J. M. (1973). "The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92(3): 329-344. Page 331.

¹⁷² Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 121.

It was during his first night sleeping on the mountain—at El Zion—that Hong came to the belief that God had led him to Mount Zion and that he would build up the House of God at this place. The stones that Hong rested on now form the sacrificial altar that is at El Zion. As noted earlier, the western side of the altar at El Zion is inscribed with a passage asserting Hong's role as the True Prophet anointed by God. The southern side of the altar has an inscription in Chinese of a poem called 'Jacob's Winter Song' (see Figure 13)¹⁷³:

Wandering by myself in the wilderness, the sun has set to the west.
Darkness surrounds me and I fall asleep with a stone as my pillow.
In my dream God appears and promises that He will be with me forever.
He promised me this land that I lay upon.
When I awake, I set the stone upright and declare my faith.
I will meet this challenge and erect a palace for God.
For all my hardships He bestowed upon me the spiritual name of Israel.
We stand as testament to His grandeur and He shall bless us all.

The centrality of El Zion to Hong's vision was established on this first night. Rather than being a minor mountain in the interior of southern Taiwan, the mountain that was to be known as Zion was given an extraordinary role. In his prayer to God, Hong entreated, among other things, for God to

Let us recognize Your Will through this Mountain... May you bless us out of this Mountain!... May the place whereon we used stones as pillows be the gateway to Heaven. Let it become Your House and the Gate of Heaven... On this mountain we await You to raise up a leader to lead us on a completely new way!¹⁷⁴

At this stage Hong was yet to meet Kong or join the New Testament Church and the mountain was yet to be named Zion. Irrespective of this, Mount Zion had been designated as integral to his future spiritual path. The mountain was transformed into a conduit between God and the human realm. As can be seen in the struggle that

¹⁷³ This translation is my own.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. Pages 7-8.

the New Testament Church waged to return to the mountain, Mount Zion is an essential part of their faith. It is important to note the distinction between God and Mount Zion – they are not the same thing. In referring to El-Zion as the God of Mount Zion, Hong wrote this “does not mean that Mt. Zion is God, nor will we ever regard this Mountain as God. It’s only that we have recognized the choice of God on Mt. Zion and that He is truly the God of Mt. Zion (NTC)”¹⁷⁵. If the New Testament Church does not have access to Mount Zion, then their ability to communicate with God would appear to be hindered. However, they would not be disadvantaged when the Tribulation occurs as co-workers will be saved wherever they are, providing that they remain true to the church’s beliefs.

Holy Temple/History Museum

The large field in which El Zion is located is in front of the Holy Temple. In May 1984 some of the exiled co-workers had the opportunity to visit Mount Zion. To their horror, they discovered that several buildings had been either torn down or severely damaged, including the original church that was completely destroyed¹⁷⁶. A large pavilion has been erected over the remains of the original church and it is now used as a history museum. This museum is down the mountain near the Victory Hall and contains a range of exhibits including the history of the New Testament Church on Mount Zion, models of the original church and the camp built in the riverbed and tools, machinery and other implements used by co-workers during the pioneering years on the mountain. The hardwood frame made of *jiyou* wood and the stone foundation are also preserved, testifying, respectively, that “Zion will never be

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Pages 121-122.

¹⁷⁶ Liu, J. (1984). *The Most Outrageous Injustice of the 20th Century*. Hsiaolin, The scattered people of Zion. Page 35.

destroyed” and “that the foundation of the Church will always be firm, and that Mount Zion will never be moved”¹⁷⁷, a notion that can be linked back to descriptions of Mount Zion found in the Old Testament.

Rebuilding the church premises appears to have been one of the main priorities for the New Testament Church when they returned to Mount Zion in 1986. The photo article about Mount Zion that appeared in the 6 October 1989 edition of *Asiaweek* shows the newly built temple being used for worship and for a wedding ceremony¹⁷⁸. The Holy Temple “is built with logs and the traditional mortise-and-tenon method. Its oriental and ancient architectural style transmits a feeling of sacredness and serenity to the entire area”¹⁷⁹. The mortise-and-tenon method relies on the supporting beams being inserted into each other, rather than by using nails or bolts. Like the original church, the Holy Temple is built primarily of logs and is on a stone foundation (see Figure 14). Televisions, speakers, a piano and three posters flank the Holy Temple’s altar (see Figure 15). The first of the posters to the left depicts Hong and Pi astride a horse that is following an eagle through the sky while towing a full Ark over a city. This poster is titled “I Know Whom I Have Believed”. The second of the posters to the left shows a large boat with a polluted city on top of it lowering an Ark laden with people, animals and plants into the water. This poster asks “Where are you? Don’t miss the boat” and includes the text “Yes to G.E.-free” and “Extinction is forever”. The poster to the right of the altar is also displayed on the side of the Triumph Hall and depicts Mount Zion rising out from a river that flows into a waterfall, crushing the city below. This poster is titled “錫安山”. The English

¹⁷⁷ Photo of sign in Mount Zion history museum taken by author on 12 January 2008.

¹⁷⁸ Anonymous (1989). “March of the Cross”. *Asiaweek*. Hong Kong, Asiaweek Limited. 15. Photos are on pages 48-51.

¹⁷⁹ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/tour.right08.htm> accessed on 15 January 2008.

text at the top reads “There’s a new world out there” and the bottom “The old order always gives way to the new” (see Figure 16). The altar can be partitioned from the rest of the room by a curtain of seashells.

The positioning of the Holy Temple in relation to El Zion and the surrounding mountains is interesting when considered in the context of traditional Chinese temple construction. While not a perfect facsimile of a traditional Chinese temple, the Holy Temple still shares several characteristics with its non-Christian precedents. As a rule with traditional Chinese temples, “the compound opens up to the south (associated with warm and beneficent *yang* influences) and has its back to the north (the direction baleful *yin* influences)”¹⁸⁰. The Holy Temple on Mount Zion is aligned according to these principles. The main door of the temple opens southward and the forested slopes of the mountain back the north side of the temple. Furthermore, the main temple tends to occupy a central position with less significant halls built to the side¹⁸¹. The Holy Temple is placed in the middle of the back of the large cleared area around El Zion, with lesser buildings such as the Tent of Shem and the Zion tree house built on the periphery of this area.

Geomancy

The layout of the Holy Temple and El Zion has some interesting geomantic properties. Geomancy is also known as *feng shui*, translated as wind and water, a concept that deals “with the supernatural relation of geographical locations to human

¹⁸⁰ Jochim, C. (1986). *Chinese Religions*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall. Page 99.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

events”¹⁸². The North Star can be located by standing at El Zion, facing north towards the Holy Temple and then lining up the Ensign of All Nations on the Holy Temple with the one flying at the peak of Mount Zion and then following the line to the point directly above El Zion¹⁸³. When looking out the main door of the Holy Temple, one’s line of sight will extend beyond El Zion to the south, down a spectacular valley. According to representatives of the church, this alignment has been recognised by others as demonstrating good *feng shui*, something that they quickly reminded me does not form part of the co-workers’ beliefs. However, Mount Zion’s good alignment had apparently been recognised by President Chiang Ching Kuo in the late 1970s and he had intended to build a cemetery at El Zion. Representatives of the church told me that this was one of the reasons why the KMT forced them off the mountain. Geomancy is an important consideration when choosing the location for a grave as it is believed to have a direct effect on the careers of the family who remain behind¹⁸⁴.

Despite their claims to the contrary, it is difficult to believe that Hong and the New Testament Church were oblivious to traditional Chinese geomancy when designing the area and El Zion. That Mount Zion comprises elements of other spiritual traditions is not without precedent. In his study of Daoist holy mountains in China, Thomas Hahn found that the Daoist “standard mountain” may also include influences from Buddhism and Confucianism¹⁸⁵. The Holy Temple, El Zion and main entrance to the area are all built on an axis that runs nearly north-south, with lesser buildings

¹⁸² Yang, C. K. (1961). *Religion in Chinese Society*. Berkeley, University of California Press. Page 263.

¹⁸³ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/tour/right08.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

¹⁸⁴ Yang, C. K. (1961). *Religion in Chinese Society*. Berkeley, University of California Press. Page 264.

¹⁸⁵ Hahn, T. (1988). "The standard Taoist mountain and related features of religious geography." *Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie* 4: 145-156.

and holy places to the side. This appears to be a concession to the architecture of traditional Chinese temple compounds, “because of the connection of north with yin and south with yang, all the major halls and gates are located along a single north-south axis”¹⁸⁶. This axis then extends southwards from El Zion down a valley for several kilometres. Such an approach, as seen in Chinese temple architecture, reflects an extension of the concept of sacred from natural landscapes, such as mountains, rivers and lakes, to a particular and human-made architectural blueprint. Whether it was a coincidence or intentional, locating the Holy Temple so that it becomes part of the axis formed by the valley and El Zion is one of the defining features of Mount Zion. The manner in which this has happened strongly resonates with the geomantic concepts that have long underpinned Chinese temple design. Indeed, while the church may deny the efficacy of *feng shui* and regard it as heretical, it is impossible to argue that the configuration of the principle sacred sites on Mount Zion in relation to the surrounding landscape do not reflect these principles. The alignment of the key features of Mount Zion is part of a larger sacred image that the mountain projects.

The shape of Mount Zion holds significance for the New Testament Church. The contours of the mountain caught Hong’s attention when God led him there in 1963. Hong recalled that while wandering in the district and approaching a checkpoint, “I suddenly saw a mountain to my left, located in a south-easterly direction. It looks like a great and majestic throne and its boundary is clear-cut”¹⁸⁷. The image of Mount Zion as a king’s throne is still used by the New Testament Church and their

¹⁸⁶ Jochim, C. (1986). *Chinese Religions*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall. Page 100.

¹⁸⁷ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 6.

website states that this “geographic appearance indeed instills (sic) a sense of sacredness”¹⁸⁸.

Tent of Shem

Just beyond the cleared area of the Holy Temple and El Zion is the Tent of Shem. Shem, Ham and Japheth are the sons of Noah and are sometimes used to represent people of yellow, black and white skin, respectively. The New Testament Church certainly does this, and ascribes particular characteristics to each. As opposed to Shemites, the “Japhites are very active, and the Hamites also have their special character”¹⁸⁹. Bringing each of these groups of people back to Mount Zion is one of the challenges faced by the Church. The notion that the people Shem, Ham and Japheth should return to Zion is repeated in literature produced by the GJCC. Thus, the Tent of Shem was built to serve two roles: as a home for all those who live in the nations of Shem, Ham and Japheth¹⁹⁰; and as “the appointed place for the GJCC to assume their ministry as well as to channel all things and direct all affairs”¹⁹¹. The Tent of Shem was completed in May 1979, shortly after Elijah Hong moved back to live on Mount Zion¹⁹² and is believed to resemble Noah’s ark¹⁹³.

¹⁸⁸ <http://http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/index.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Hong, E. (1994). *Vessels Who Bring the Dawn of Salvation*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 86.

¹⁹⁰ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 112.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. Page 126.

¹⁹² Ibid. Page 124.

¹⁹³ Ibid. Photo section page 105.

Christ is the Rock

The final important landmark on this part of Mount Zion is a large rock inscribed with Christ is the Rock (see Figure 17). The spiritual role of this rock is gleaned from Isaiah 28:16:

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

“ Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation,
A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation;
Whoever believes will not act hastily.

The church understands Christ is the Rock to serve this role of foundation¹⁹⁴. The large rock is one of many that bestrew the area. It was revealed at the first meeting held here that as God’s servant, Hong will “lead the GJCC to accomplish His predestined Will and ... lead all nations back to the Mt. Zion in Heaven”¹⁹⁵. This first meeting at the large rock, held on 3 May 1979, heralded the beginning of a number of important interactions between Hong and God at the place. Late on the night of 11 June 1979, Hong and some co-workers were praying at the rock and God confirmed their prayers with lightning. Hong wrote that during this experience “God let us experience the power by which Elijah channelled all things and directed all affairs in his prayer”¹⁹⁶. Three weeks later, on 2 July 1979, the Spirit of God prophesised through Hong while standing on the rock that “I will reveal My majesty and let My fury explode upon the enemies. My holy people shall be gathered before Me and all nations shall flock to this Mountain”¹⁹⁷. While this prophecy reiterates existing prophecies experienced by the church’s apostles, that it occurred at ‘Christ is the Rock’ and within a short distance from El Zion, indicates the importance of this area as medium between the human world and God.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. Photos section page 90.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. Photos section page 91.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. Page 129.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Page 130.

Functions of the modern Mount Zion

Weddings

The New Testament Church conducts wedding ceremonies at the Holy Temple. Marriage is an important aspect of life in the church and Hong said it “symbolizes Christ and the church. It is holy and should be honored by all. Everyone should face it cautiously”¹⁹⁸. Pictures from 1989 of newly married couples show the brides and grooms wearing what is best described as traditional western wedding attire – the grooms are dressed in suits, shirts and ties and the brides wear puffy white wedding dresses. The main feature that distinguished these couples from those married in other more conventional church services is that each bride and groom waved the Ensign of Zion¹⁹⁹. By 2007, the apparel worn by the bride and groom had changed considerably. While both bride and groom continue to carry the Ensign of Zion, they are now both dressed in plain white NTC t-shirts, fisherman pants for the groom and a long skirt for the bride, rope belts tied by a large shell, barefoot, crowned with flowers and pearls and wearing flower necklaces²⁰⁰. While the New Testament Church demonstrates a strong Taiwanese indigenisation of Christianity, there are examples such as the garments worn by this bride and groom and the sea-shell curtain in the temple that indicate an incorporation of aspects of South Pacific culture into their Taiwanese church.

¹⁹⁸ Hong, E. (1994). *Vessels Who Bring the Dawn of Salvation*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 91.

¹⁹⁹ Anonymous (1989). “March of the Cross”. *Asiaweek*. Hong Kong, Asiaweek Limited. 15.

²⁰⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeFTDGwo8sA> accessed on 12 August 2008.

Agriculture

Despite being in the mountains and not having much arable land, the New Testament Church has established a successful farm on Mount Zion (see Figure 18). When God led Hong to Mount Zion in 1963, he felt that God wanted him, among other things, “to lead a pastoral life like Isaac”²⁰¹. Hong and his colleagues were quick to begin farming. In the days before they were exiled from Mount Zion, the co-workers farmed goats, cattle, geese, hens, ducks, turkeys, plums, pears, loquats, chestnuts, passion fruit, among other crops, as well as reforesting the barren slopes²⁰². The co-workers toiled hard and Hong praised God for their success in reforesting the mountain²⁰³. In *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God* Hong refers to Isaiah 51:3 in justifying the agricultural efforts of the church: “For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody”²⁰⁴. The church’s farming enterprise suffered during their years of exile from Mount Zion and the buildings on the mountain fell into a state of disrepair.

Since returning to Mount Zion, the New Testament Church has continued to develop their agricultural enterprise. While much of this expansion has happened on the church’s consecrated land in other countries, food remains one of the key aspects of life on Mount Zion and they “hope to raise the world’s awareness on the importance

²⁰¹ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 5.

²⁰² Anonymous (1986). *KMT's 20-year persecution on NTC*. New York, Church of New York. Page 5.

²⁰³ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 58.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

of returning to nature and consuming organic food”²⁰⁵. There were more than 300 co-workers residing on the mountain in late 2007 and they are required to perform all the work associated with operating a large-scale labour intensive organic farm. Much of the income from Mount Zion’s farms now comes from plums and camellia tea-oil, crops that are more easily grown on the mountain slopes²⁰⁶.

While emphasising the health and environmental benefits of organic produce, the New Testament Church has other reasons for engaging in this type of agriculture. This motivation is driven by their faith in the purity of the Garden of Eden, and that the perfection enjoyed there was a result of following God’s rule, rather than the rule of human societies. The church recognises that societies are now seeking to solve environmental problems and are “heading back to nature”. However, this can only be totally achieved by following God’s law of creation as “nature’s standard yardstick is God’s law of creation”²⁰⁷. Co-workers explained to me that farming by God’s law of creation involves using the Bible as the guide to farming technology. While this does not rule out using machinery, it does ban the use of chemical fertilisers, preservatives and pesticides, as these are not prescribed in the Bible. Therefore, the church sees that one of the best ways of creating an Eden-like environment is to avoid using chemicals in food production. In conversations with co-workers from Queensland, I was told that the acts of producing, preparing and consuming food grown in accordance with God’s law of creation become acts of worship in themselves. Therefore, not only is the produce of Mount Zion supposedly good for the environment and the health of the person who eats it, participation in its

²⁰⁵ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/tour/right04.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

²⁰⁶ Wang, M. (2007). “A New Eden On Mt. Zion”. *Taiwan Panorama*. Taipei, Taiwan Government Information Office 16 November 2007.

²⁰⁷ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/produce/content.html> accessed on 15 February 2008.

lifecycle is also of spiritual benefit. Rubinstein interprets placing such a strong reliance on texts, such as the Bible and the writings of Hong and Kong, as demonstration of a “subtle Chinese sensibility”²⁰⁸. The New Testament Church’s natural approach to agriculture and appreciation of the natural environment is not a foreign concept for a Chinese religious group. Daniel Overmyer wrote that most Chinese religions

assume that the world itself is a sacred place of power and mystery, and that to human beings belongs the important task of cooperating with this power and making it operative within society²⁰⁹.

Such a belief can be seen in the New Testament Church’s reverence for Mount Zion. In particular, the church’s approach to a ‘natural’ lifestyle shares both modern ecology and Chinese religions’ understanding of “the world to be a product of delicately balanced forces that we interfere with at our peril, since we are part of it ourselves”²¹⁰. Likewise, food has played an important symbolic and spiritual role in Chinese society. Traditionally, food has been consumed not just for nutritional purposes, but also to balance the *yin* and *yang* within the body²¹¹. The church eschews using such terms to identify the benefits of their produce, but still imbue the food with some meaning beyond being natural, organic or tasty. The church frames their understanding of the benefit of their agricultural produce in terms of God’s laws of creation and its production and consumption being acts of worship. However, if this spiritual framework is stripped away, the lifestyle on Mount Zion can be seen to be similar to many other healthy lifestyle groups throughout the world in that there is a strong emphasis on the benefit of producing and consuming healthy food. There is

²⁰⁸ Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). *The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community*. The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 461.

²⁰⁹ Overmyer, D. (1986). *Religions of China*. New York, Harper Collins. Page 13.

²¹⁰ Ibid. Page 16.

²¹¹ Fan Lizhu, J. D. Whitehead, et al. (2006). *Religion in the Late Modern World*, Current Affairs Press. Page 231.

another major God-based enterprise that the New Testament Church conducts on Mount Zion.

Education

The children who live on Mount Zion are now educated in the New Testament Church's 'God-based' education system known as Eden Homestead. In the early years of settlement on the mountain children were educated in the nearby village school²¹². The secular education provided was not congruent with the values that the co-workers were attempting to install in their children. The reforms to the education system that were ushered in during the mid 1990s relaxed the centralisation that typified Taiwan's education and enabled private education to expand²¹³. As a response to this, in 1997 Hong declared that the New Testament Church would educate its children itself, and do so on Mount Zion²¹⁴. The conventional education system was damned and the movement of children of co-workers out of these schools is celebrated on posters at Mount Zion –

To us -
Diplomas are trash and school is history
We are no longer slaves to grades
nor are we exam machines under the
oppressive education system
of the human kingdom
We learn for God
This is the most meaningful and valuable²¹⁵.

²¹² Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 47.

²¹³ Pan, H. and C. Yu (1999). "Educational Reforms: Their Impact on School Effectiveness and School Improvement in Taiwan, R.O.C." *School Effectiveness and Improvement* 10(1): 72-85. Page 79.

²¹⁴ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/index3.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

²¹⁵ Photo of poster on Mount Zion taken by author on 12 January 2008.

The Eden Homestead education system is a radical rebuttal of the mainstream system in Taiwan. There is a strong emphasis placed on nature, as part of God's law of creation, and students study in a variety of fields "ranging from sweeping, mopping, cooking, sewing, cosmetics, construction, farming ... to languages, sciences, art and computer"²¹⁶.

The Eden Homestead on Mount Zion is part of global network of schools that is operated by the New Testament Church. The church claims to have "close to 1000" children learning in Eden Homesteads worldwide²¹⁷. Exchange forms a large part of the education system, with representatives of the church telling me that children spend months at a time in other countries, where they participate in Eden Homesteads at church properties, some of which are consecrated lands and are termed 'off-shoots of Zion'. The strong family bonds that are generated within the Church help mitigate homesickness felt by the students as 'uncles' and 'aunties' (Church co-workers) educate the children through "faith, love and patience"²¹⁸. While the education of the New Testament Church's children is kept in-house, those that are eligible for military service in Taiwan still participate.

Taiwan has a requirement of military service. Under the Military Service Law, all males are required to fulfil 22 months of military service²¹⁹. Representatives of the Church have told me that the young men of Mount Zion fulfil this obligation. While willingly participating in military service might be an attempt to minimise the perception of the New Testament Church being a civil disturbance, it does not appear

²¹⁶ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/index3.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/q&a/page_05.htm accessed on 2 September 2008.

to comfortably reconcile with the ultimate goal of Eden Homestead, that is “to terminate the systems of the human kingdoms, end the history of men, accomplish God's plan of salvation, usher in the new heaven and new earth, and bring all creation into the perfect realm of Eden to enjoy God's commanded blessings”²²⁰. Willingly taking part in the national army could be seen to validate the rule of the human kingdom, when so many of the New Testament Church’s other activities snub it. At Mount Zion my guide told me that officials in the army are very happy with the range of skills and high level of competency demonstrated by graduates of Eden Homestead.

Tourism

Mount Zion has evolved into something of a tourist destination in the years since the New Testament Church was allowed to return. Guests are welcomed to Mount Zion and the church hopes that they will be inspired to know and accept God²²¹.

Despite building a multi-story car park and having a designated parking area for coaches as well as providing maps and a huge number of information signs, church representatives have told me that Mount Zion is not designed as a tourist destination – it is a pilgrimage destination. This notion is supported by the church’s continuing unwillingness to levy a fee for visitors. The church claims that the number of visitors can be several thousand on public holidays and “as high as the tens of thousands” during the Chinese New Year²²². As it is located in Kaohsiung Country, visitors with private transport from the nearby large cities of Tainan and Kaohsiung

²²⁰ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/index3.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

²²¹ home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/tour/right11.htm accessed on 15 February 2008.

²²² home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/history/flow/right.htm accessed on 15 February 2008.

can easily visit Mount Zion for a day trip. As of December 2007 it was much more difficult to visit by public bus as there were only two buses that went past the mountain. Aside from spiritual motivations, visitors may be persuaded to visit Mount Zion to witness the communal lifestyle enjoyed by its residents. Likewise, they may be interested in the controversial history of the mountain or merely just want to enjoy a walk around the attractively landscaped gardens and forests.

An additional reason for public interest in Mount Zion may be the growing popularity of the LOHAS movement. LOHAS is an acronym for 'lifestyles of health and sustainability' and is a consumer movement based on a perceived social or environmental benefit resulting from purchasing specific goods or services. Taiwan, along with Japan, has been recognised as being home to one of the fastest growing LOHAS sectors²²³. The organic food and natural products produced by the New Testament Church, along with their God-based 'back-to-nature' lifestyle holds many similarities with the LOHAS movement. The growing acceptance of, and interest in, LOHAS may have a normative effect on Mount Zion and the New Testament Church as there might be a greater degree of acceptance of their organic produce, in spite of their radical Christian beliefs.

While visitors to Mount Zion will be unable to avoid seeing posters that provide forceful and graphic denunciations of the KMT (see Figure 3), there are also a number of guides roaming the mountain who are able to explain the history, role and landscape of Mount Zion as well as elucidate the New Testament Church's scriptural position.

²²³ <http://greensx.com/info/lohas.php> accessed on 12 August 2008.

Pilgrimage

If Mount Zion is to be conceived as a tourist destination, then it is best considered within a larger context – Mount Zion as a pilgrimage destination. This is a role that Mount Zion in Taiwan has taken on due to God forsaking Mount Zion in the Middle East. Hong travelled to Israel in December 1998 where he “saw degeneration and desolation in Jerusalem, completely the opposite of what a holy city should be according to the Bible”²²⁴. He saw that this degeneration and desolation was evident in the state of Jerusalem’s Mount Zion and ‘so-called temple’, the death of Jesus and the prophets at the hand of Jews and the ongoing failure of Jews to recognise Jesus as the Messiah²²⁵. Taiwan’s Mount Zion stands in stark contrast to this. It is “gloriously beautiful... because the New Testament Church, God’s children, firmly believe Bro. Elijah Hong is the head apostle, the Prophet of All Nations and the latter-day Elijah sent by God for this generation”²²⁶. As a result, Taiwan’s Mount Zion has usurped Jerusalem and “All those who wish to make pilgrimage (to worship the Great King of Zion, the Lord God Who made the heavens and earth, and to entreat His grace from the prophet of the East) must come to the Mt. Zion in Taiwan”²²⁷.

International pilgrims have visited Mount Zion for many years now. In addition to the co-workers who have attended conventions at Mount Zion, Hong writes fondly of the co-workers who travelled to the riverbed at the base of Mount Zion during the

²²⁴ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/gospel/prophet/right02.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Pages iv-v.

time spent in exile. While eking out an existence in the riverbed, Hong and the exiles were visited by “countless pilgrimage teams... too numerous to enumerate here”²²⁸. These pilgrims came to Mount Zion from as far away as Tahiti and Honolulu²²⁹. Now that the New Testament Church has returned to the mountain and is more established there, pilgrims continue to visit. Co-workers in Brisbane told me that they attempt to return to Mount Zion at least once every two years.

As the home of the Present Ark and as Eden, the New Testament Church has ascribed Mount Zion with roles that are rich in biblical overtones. The mountain is both pure in the sense of it being the original Eden as well as being the launching pad to eternal life with God in heaven. The Church’s website goes as far as to say “Utopia, the ideal world that all humanity has been pursuing for thousands of years, is a reality on Mount Zion”²³⁰. Doing this positions Mount Zion as the ‘other’ in relation to Taiwan and even to the rest of the world – modern or developing, secular or otherwise. The world inhabited by what Kong and Hong have referred to as “the denominations” and those who have not accepted the truth of BWS is in stark contrast to the righteous path pursued by the prophets and co-workers of the New Testament Church, those whose virtue is amplified on Mount Zion.

Sacred/profane space

The dichotomy of space being classified as either sacred or profane is one that has value when studying Mount Zion in Taiwan. An early proponent of these two categories was Emile Durkheim. He wrote that the “division of the world into two

²²⁸ Ibid. Page 152.

²²⁹ Ibid. Page 129.

²³⁰ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/English/zion/history/elzion/right.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of religious thought”²³¹. The two spheres are mutually exclusive to the extent that “there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or so radically opposed to one another”²³² and that the “two worlds are not only conceived of as separate, but as even hostile and jealous rivals of each other”²³³. However, Durkheim does not see contact between the two as impossible, as the existence of the profane is a necessary condition for the sacred to respond to, except that the “two classes cannot even approach each other and keep their own nature at the same time”²³⁴. The New Testament Church sees a clear delineation between Mount Zion and the rest of the world. The Cherubim Gate indicates “to visitors that Eden is on the other side of the entrance, where all creation lives in harmony and peace. In other words, the realms of Eden are found on Zion”²³⁵. A warning on the Mount Zion website reiterates this division. It requests that visitors to Mount Zion do not bring any religious paraphernalia or conduct idol-worshiping on the mountain, interfere with any plant life or even participate in worldly activities, such as “smoking, drinking, gambling or picknicking”²³⁶. While this indicates the New Testament Church’s willingness for people to visit Mount Zion, whether to be exposed to the truth of blood, water and spirit or to buy merchandise, a degree of compromise is required as habits from the secular world and the denominations are not compatible with the sanctity of the mountain.

²³¹ Durkheim, E. (1926). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. London, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. Page 37.

²³² Ibid. Page 38.

²³³ Ibid. Page 39.

²³⁴ Ibid. Page 40.

²³⁵ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/history/elzion/right2.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

²³⁶ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english> accessed on 15 February 2008.

The sacred nature of Mount Zion is repeatedly emphasised to visitors to the mountain.

A poster outside of the Victory Hall announces that

Zion is not contaminated by atheistic culture and is free from the bondage of corruption. There are no soldiers or police officers, banks, stockmarkets, courts, or tax departments here. Curses, sighing, toiling, worries and sorrows have all fled! Liberty, freedom, joy, peace, rest, love and warmth fill the air! Here you can enjoy the abundance of God's creation to the fullest. Zion is the miniature of the holy city, New Jerusalem. All nations! Come to Zion to enjoy the commanded blessings of God!²³⁷

Hong has admitted to the slothfulness of “high-ranking officials” on Mount Zion, putting a different spin on the above proclamation of the mountain being a toil-free and rest-filled utopia. Hong worried that the “bankers’ hours” worked by senior co-workers on Mount Zion was undermining preparation for the Tribulation:

When the great revival comes, the whites, blacks, and Asians will come from all continents and oceans. How will we serve them? We will not be able to keep up! We must accept the Lord's equipping. Let us be hardworking, diligent and faithful vessels.²³⁸

While this could be seen as a trifle, this is an admission from Hong that the professed utopia of Mount Zion remains a work in process.

Aside from the utopian and holy lifestyle enjoyed by the residents of Mount Zion there are other instances that allude to its spiritual power. Material published by the GJCC tells of miracles that have occurred on Mount Zion, such as light being emitted from Hong's body while he prayed, people being converted to Christianity and people being healed from sickness²³⁹. Hong himself writes of the benefits of studying the Bible while on Mount Zion. While he and the co-workers found some passages difficult to understand when read off the mountain, the meaning of the

²³⁷ Photo of poster on Mount Zion taken by author on 12 January 2008.

²³⁸ Hong, E. (1994). *Vessels Who Bring the Dawn of Salvation*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 88.

²³⁹ Anonymous (1986). *KMT's 20-year persecution on NTC*. New York, Church of New York. Page 5.

passages become clear when read on Mount Zion. Hong believes that the spiritual power of Mount Zion was essential for church members to truly understand the Bible²⁴⁰.

The position of Mount Zion in relation to the rest of the world is also worth considering. In defending claims that Mount Zion has moved from Israel to Taiwan, an anonymous author from the church first reiterates that God chose to move Mount Zion to Taiwan and then states that “Mt. Zion is the center of God's testimony on earth and the tabernacle where God dwells with man...It is the place where pilgrims of all nations come to worship Jesus Christ the great King.”²⁴¹. Hong had proposed this idea earlier in *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*²⁴². While this is not a declaration of Mount Zion being the physical centre of the earth, it does position Mount Zion as the centre from where God operates and the focal point that people of all nations will return to.

As mentioned earlier, a body of work evolved that views Israel's Mount Zion as an evolution of the Canaanite Mount Zaphon. Here Mount Zion is envisioned as a conduit between heaven and earth and as a cosmic centre from where fertilising streams come forth. It has been demonstrated that the New Testament Church believes that Mount Zion in Taiwan shares these qualities. Mircea Eliade describes such a transcendent place as “*axis mundi*, which at once connects and supports heaven and earth and whose base is fixed in the world below (the infernal regions). Such as a cosmic pillar can be only at the very center of the universe, for the whole

²⁴⁰ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 141.

²⁴¹ Anonymous (1993). *Defending the Truth*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 28.

²⁴² Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 97.

of the habitable world extends around it”²⁴³. Robert A. Segal summarises Eliade’s approach by writing that sacred places are “those spots where god is believed to have appeared – the assumption being that wherever god has once appeared, that god, even if formally omnipresent, is more likely to appear anew”²⁴⁴. Based on previous communication with God, Hong and the New Testament Church certainly believe that God will reappear at Mount Zion in Taiwan. Furthermore, the fundamental importance of Mount Zion to the church can be seen in the struggle with the KMT over the right to reside there and in the centrality of Mount Zion to their eschatological vision. Eliade believes fixed points such as Mount Zion that manifest the sacred are essential for meaning to be created in the world²⁴⁵. However, this view can be contested.

Jonathan Z. Smith argues that the centre is not an inherently sacred construction. Whereas Eliade uses terms such as *hierophany* or *theophany* to represent sacred space created by the manifestation of the sacred in an object or the appearance of a god²⁴⁶, Smith suggests that “The ‘Center’ is not a secure pattern to which data may be brought as illustrative; it is a dubious notion that will have to be established anew on the basis of detailed comparative endeavours”²⁴⁷. Given the many ‘centres’ that exist and hold meaning to the innumerable religions of the world this is an argument that has merit. Indeed, Mount Zion has only been in Taiwan for a relatively short period of time when placed in the context of Mount Zion in Israel and its Canaanite

²⁴³ Eliade, M. (1959). *The Sacred & The Profane*. New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Page 36-37.

²⁴⁴ Segal, R. A. (2005). “Theories of religion”. *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. J. R. Hinnells. Abingdon, Routledge. Page 51.

²⁴⁵ Eliade, M. (1959). *The Sacred & The Profane*. New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Pages 11 and 22.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. Pages 11 and 25.

²⁴⁷ Smith, J. Z. (1987). *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press. Page 17.

predecessor Mount Zaphon. Writing about Israel's Mount Zion, David E. Sopher states "The Jewish concept of a sacred land, Zion, is well known; that no other land could be ritually proper is suggested in the exiled poet's question: 'For how can we sing the Lord's song on alien soil?'"²⁴⁸. The passage Sopher refers to is Psalm 137:3. Taiwan is certainly a long way from Israel and has no established ritual purity for Jews. However, as God advised Hong that He had forsaken the Middle East and chosen Taiwan as the place for His mountain then this can be seen as a strong contest to the perceived inviolability of the biblical Zion. For no one can qualify what Hong has experienced through his communication with God beyond taking his word. In spite of this, the co-workers of the New Testament Church maintain strong faith in his vision and testify to Mount Zion's relocation to Taiwan. Not only has Hong had to justify the movement of Mount Zion to his followers, but also to local authorities, the KMT and even to the public at large. The argument put forward by Hong as to the legitimacy of Mount Zion in Taiwan is fraught. For instance, it is difficult to assert that Taiwan's Mount Zion is inviolable using the same biblical passages that assert the inviolability of Israel's Mount Zion, only to dismiss the mountain in Israel because of a revelation from God.

Eden

One role that the New Testament Church repeatedly ascribes to Mount Zion is that of the Garden of Eden. As explained earlier, the biblical Mount Zion was also given this role. In explaining the benefits of God-based education, a church poster also states that "Man is predestined to live in Eden, Life in Eden is the most correct

²⁴⁸ Sopher, D. E. (1967). *Geography of Religions*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall Inc. Page 48.

lifestyle for man”²⁴⁹. Part of the church’s claim that Mount Zion is Eden is based on the mountain’s physical appearance. The co-workers toiled considerably to transform an undeveloped and relatively wild piece of land into a thriving pastoral community. In 1983, at a time when the church was in exile and Mount Zion was considerably less established than it is now, Hong declared “The desolate Mount Zion had become the most beautiful Eden through the construction of the people of Zion in one accord. This was the hard enterprise brought to fruition by the people of Zion with blood, tears and sweat. It was also due to the intensive care and mighty protection of the Great King of Zion”²⁵⁰. The qualities of Eden are not limited Mount Zion’s physical beauty.

The beliefs and actions of Mount Zion’s residents also contribute to its status as Eden. In particular, it is their relationship with God that is important. Of those living on Mount Zion “everyone fears the Lord, so men live in perfect harmony with God”²⁵¹. This reverence for the Lord is manifested in the residents’ God-based life-style. Their appreciation of all plants and animals as well as the landscape contributes to the reappearance of Eden on the mountain²⁵². The New Testament Church also advertises Mount Zion as being a place where people live in harmony regardless of age, gender, race and so forth and love each other as one family in Christ²⁵³. Furthermore, the Church’s commitment to food produced in accordance with God’s law—that is, organic food—is another way that Mount Zion is Eden. The church

²⁴⁹ Photo of poster on Mount Zion taken by author on 12 January 2008.

²⁵⁰ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade.

²⁵¹ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/history/elzion/right2.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/history/elzion/right.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

considers their commitment to chemical-free living to be fundamental to recreating Eden based on the organic farming practices recorded in the Bible²⁵⁴.

Mount Zion's status as Eden remains far from certain. While the New Testament Church was allowed back on the mountain in 1986, their claim of ownership continues to be unresolved. Talking to a representative of the Church in December 2007, I was told that the New Testament Church had been in a stalemate with the Democratic Progressive Party since they were elected to rule Taiwan in 2000. While he gave no suggestion that the KMT, who returned to power in early 2008, would pose a threat to the New Testament Church's claim to Mount Zion, he admitted that their claim to the mountain remained uncertain. When quizzed about the New Testament Church's claim to Mount Zion in 2006, Taipei Mayor (and current President of Taiwan) Ma Ying-jeou was dismissive of the situation saying "Who cares if they think Mount Zion is in Taiwan? ... Religion grows out of persecution. This is universal" and that the KMT did not handle the situation well at the time²⁵⁵. Given this, it appears the New Testament Church's settlement on Mount Zion might be safe from the state's interference for the time being.

Ark

In addition to its role as Eden, Mount Zion is considered by the New Testament Church to be the home of the Present Ark. This role was recognised by Hong in the years prior to the Church's exile. Hong's son Jung Chang had returned to Mount Zion with a range of animals that had been donated by co-workers who lived away

²⁵⁴ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/zion/produce/content.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

²⁵⁵ <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2006/03/26/2003299282> accessed on 28 August 2008.

from Mount Zion. Upon seeing the monkeys, turtles and birds that his son arrived with, Hong prayed to God and had it revealed that “He brought me up the Mountain to prepare the ark (build the glorious NTC) for this generation as well as proclaim to them His Will that they may escape the impending Great Tribulation”²⁵⁶. The New Testament Church, as an organisation made ‘of’ men, is the Present Ark. As discussed earlier, the image of the Ark features prominently in posters hanging near the altar in the Holy Temple and the Tent of Shem is considered by the church to bear a physical resemblance to the Ark. When visiting Mount Zion I did not come across any evidence of animals, paired or single, other than farm animals.

Offshoots of Zion

While Mount Zion has a well-defined boundary in Taiwan, it conceptually spreads across the globe. The New Testament Church has established a number of ‘offshoots of Zion’ in Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United States of America and islands in the South Pacific. As of February 2007, there were 17 offshoots of Zion around the world²⁵⁷. While the church has co-workers throughout mainland China, it has no official presence or consecrated land there as it is a banned organisation. In 1995 the Chinese Ministry of Public Security has designated the church as a “cultic organisation”, primarily because it challenges the authority of the state and only respects the authority of God²⁵⁸. The offshoots of Zion are consecrated land where the church, through its co-workers, undertakes various activities. These include farming crops, animals and even pearls, as well as acting as

²⁵⁶ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 137.

²⁵⁷ Anonymous (2007). 錫安聖山充滿天下 (*The Offshoots of Holy Mount Zion*) Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade.

²⁵⁸ Ministry of Public Security. (2002). "Document issued by the Ministry of Public Security." *Chinese Law & Religion Monitor* 1(4): 29-52.

centres for church activities and other enterprises. When visiting the New Testament Church's Mount Hebron in Malaysia in 1994, Hong announced to the assembled co-workers, "God is the God of Zion as well as the God of Hebron. The value of a consecrated land does not lie in its fertility, beautiful landscape, view, or easy access, but in God's choice, presence and power"²⁵⁹. As Hong made this announcement on a tour of the New Testament Church's consecrated lands in Malaysia, it can be extrapolated that he is referring to all of the church's consecrated lands and not just Hebron. The consecrated lands appear to be equal with Mount Zion in that God is of them, just as he is of Mount Zion. In fact, one of the senior co-workers in Australia advised me that while Mount Zion is the main mountain, God's power and presence is the same at all of the consecrated lands around the world. This parity is reinforced by "God's choice, presence, and power". Just as Mount Zion was chosen by God, so too were the consecrated lands. While Hong says the "value of a consecrated land does not lie in its fertility, beautiful landscape, view, or easy access", it would be neglectful to not examine these aspects of the offshoots of Zion.

The pamphlet 錫安聖山充滿天下 (*The Offshoots of Holy Mount Zion*) shows pictures from each of the offshoots of Zion. The offshoots of Zion appear to be located, for the most part, in places that are fertile and beautiful. Co-workers are shown in the various stages of dealing with bounteous harvests – planting, harvesting and preparing crops for sale. If they are not hard at work, they are shown to be either having fun or engaged in colourful acts of worship. It is difficult to gauge how easy the offshoots of Zion are to access, although given the large numbers of co-workers

²⁵⁹ Hong, E. (1994). *Vessels Who Bring the Dawn of Salvation*. Mount Zion, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Pages 3-4.

that are in some of the photos, it cannot be too difficult to bring people in. Likewise, the large amounts of produce that each of the offshoots of Zion seems capable of producing indicate that it must be reasonably easy to access markets and distribution channels. For instance, UNNS α and UNNS Ω in southeast Queensland are farms of 200 hectares and 400 hectares respectively. They are located in rural areas but remain within a serviceable distance to the large markets of Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast.

An interesting feature of the offshoots of Zion is the main temple at each. Each of the temples is, to some degree, a replica of the Holy Temple on Mount Zion. Variations appear to be either pragmatic, such as the choice of materials used (a tin roof) and the size of the temple (based on the land or resources available) or cultural, in that some of the temples mimic local architectural styles (for example, the temple at Eden Isle in Polynesia is an open-air building with a grass thatched roof). It is worth bearing in mind that the Holy Temple on Mount Zion was built using locally sourced materials and its “oriental and ancient architectural style transmits a feeling of sacredness and serenity to the entire area”²⁶⁰. The rebuilt temple on Mount Zion appears to have served as a template for the temples built on newly consecrated ground as part of the New Testament Church’s global expansion. Having most of the new temples built in accordance with the rebuilt temple on Mount Zion indicates a uniquely Taiwanese aspect to the New Testament Church’s version of Christianity; the style of the Mount Zion temple represents an ideal form that must be adapted to the local situation.

²⁶⁰ <http://home.zion.org.tw/zion/english/tour.right08.htm> accessed on 15 February 2008.

Representations of Mount Zion

With God having forsaken the Middle East and choosing Mount Zion in Taiwan as His mountain, the New Testament Church has the task of bringing this to the world's attention. This is not an easy task! That God has led his chosen prophet—Elijah Hong—to his chosen holy mountain in Taiwan—Mount Zion—is a radical concept and one that has not been widely accepted in the last 30 years. However, there has been some acceptance from mapmakers. Both Google Maps²⁶¹ and the Lonely Planet²⁶² include a reference to Mount Zion or to 錫安山. Beyond this, the New Testament Church has used three main mediums to alert the world to the existence of Mount Zion – books and pamphlets, video and the act of preaching.

Possibly the most thorough account of the history and role of Mount Zion is Hong's magnum opus – *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Published in 1983, it chronicles the early years of Mount Zion, Hong's struggle for leadership of the New Testament Church and the first part of the church's exile on the riverbed. The church's pro-Mount Zion public relations campaign accelerated during the period of exile, with a number of pamphlets published outlining their claims to the land and provided their account of the acts of the KMT, such *The Most Outrageous Injustice of the 20th Century* and *KMT's 20-year Persecution on NTC*. Since returning to Mount Zion the GJCC has not been so prolific with its published output regarding the mountain and no new Mount Zion-centric posters, pamphlets or books appear to have been published in English since 2000.

²⁶¹ “錫安山” on maps.google.com.au accessed on 30 September 2008.

²⁶² Kelly, R. and J. S. Brown (2007). *Taiwan*. Melbourne, Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. Page 247.

Most of the GJCC's Mount Zion publications are available on the Mount Zion website. As of August 2008, this website was not immediately found using popular search engines such as Google or Yahoo. However, once located, a visitor to this site will find a great deal of information about the New Testament Church and Mount Zion. A potted history is provided as well as details about contemporary life on Mount Zion. While the Chinese section has the most information, there are also translations in English, French and Spanish. Pamphlets, posters and books (written by Kong, Hong and Pi) can be downloaded too. A range of Chinese language videos can be downloaded from the Chinese website and a number of New Testament Church videos are also available on the public video sharing website Youtube.

Hong and the New Testament Church have invested a large amount of time and energy in personally informing the people of the world about Mount Zion in Taiwan. Beginning in 2000, Hong undertook 18 missions across the world. Covering Europe, Africa, Australia, India, North America and South America, Hong warned people "Noah's Ark has been built. Get on board on be kept alive (sic), for the Great Tribulation is at hand"²⁶³. Hong's missions are well documented on posters displayed at Mount Zion.

Despite the best efforts of Hong, the GJCC and the co-workers, the New Testament Church remains a minority group within the Taiwanese Protestant scene, which itself is dwarfed by other religions on the small island. Using figures from Taiwan's Ministry of Interior, the U.S. Department of State reported that Protestants in Taiwan only account for 2.6% of the total population in 2006 who identify with a particular

²⁶³ Photo of poster in Victory Hall on Mount Zion taken by author on 12 January 2008.

religion²⁶⁴. This is in contrast with Buddhism and Daoism, religions that account for 35% and 33% of the population respectively. Rubinstein argues that Taiwanese Pentecostal and charismatic churches “bear the burden of ‘double marginality’” as not only does the Taiwanese community see them as marginal in that they are Protestant, the rest of the Protestant churches seem them as being marginal within that group²⁶⁵. The New Testament Church could therefore be seen to be ‘double marginal’. Writing in 1994, Rubinstein asserted that the New Testament Church

has become an all too visible entity in Taiwan’s spirit-filled (Pentecostal/charismatic) church community. And, as Protestant church leaders will sadly admit, it has also become a factor in national Taiwanese life – one that casts all Christian organizations in a bad light.²⁶⁶

The activities of the church that would have contributed to this poor image include the protests that took part in the struggle for Mount Zion, although proselytising and preaching may also have offended other Christian organisations. The New Testament Church appears to have been much less conspicuous since Rubinstein wrote about them shortly after their years of exile and the public’s memory of the clashes is probably starting to fade.

²⁶⁴ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71337.htm> accessed on 9 August 2008.

²⁶⁵ Rubinstein, M. A. (1996). “Holy Spirit Taiwan: Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in the Republic of China”. *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. D. H. Bays. Stanford, Stanford University Press. Page 363.

²⁶⁶ Rubinstein, M. A. (1994). “The New Testament Church and the Taiwanese Protestant Community”. *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*. M. A. Rubinstein. Armonk, M. E. Sharpe Inc: 445-475. Page 445.

Conclusion

It has been shown that the New Testament Church's novel belief that a historic sacred site—such as Mount Zion in Israel—could be relocated to the other side of the world is one that has many facets. As the point from which God's teachings shall spread forth it is important for the church to bring this mountain to the attention of the world. Unfortunately for the New Testament Church they have not been able to find a willing audience of any significant size; growth has been slow for the church. Hong, the third leader of the church, is now in his mid-eighties and has not publicly anointed a successor. That Hong, Cheung and Kong have not been able to inspire many beyond the relatively small number of co-workers who have rallied behind them over the past 45 years is not a sign of failure. Indeed, it is a considerable achievement for the church to have lasted this long especially given its tumultuous history. And underpinning this history, particularly under the leadership of Hong, has been the unwavering faith in Mount Zion as "God's chosen mountain in the East".

There are several reasons why the New Testament Church has relocated Mount Zion from Israel to Taiwan. No one reason can adequately explain this movement when viewed in isolation from the others. Having discussed the history of Mount Zion in Israel, the precedent set by other East Asian NRMs in creating sacred space, the context in Taiwan in which the New Testament Church has grown, the history and theology of the church and what the modern Mount Zion actually is, I will now extract the key features that explain why the church has relocated Mount Zion.

To begin with, consideration must be given to Mount Zion in Israel. This particular hill has not always been known as Mount Zion and the exact location of the mountain has been an issue of conjecture. Despite the ‘inviolability’ of Mount Zion, the malleability of where exactly Mount Zion is works in the favour of the New Testament Church and their relocated mountain.

Hong is the protagonist in the story of Mount Zion in Taiwan – he was directed to the mountain by God, pioneered the settlement there, led the struggle to return from the KMT-imposed exile and since returning, has overseen its re-establishment. He believes God directed him to the place that “would become the center of spiritual communication and testimony”²⁶⁷ and that “God has chosen Mt. Zion in Taiwan, and that God wants to bring all nations back to this mountain”²⁶⁸. God may have chosen Mount Zion in Taiwan, but without the intervention of an actor such as Hong there would not have been any movement and Mount Zion would still be safely set in Israel. Furthermore, without Hong it is unlikely that the New Testament Church would have proceeded down the Mount Zion-centric path that it has for the last three decades. Mount Zion is the product of Hong’s vision; the mountain did not play a part in the teachings of either Kong or Cheung. Hong was already waiting on the mountain when he met Kong and later understood that Cheung did not feel Mount Zion should be a priority for the church. If Hong had not had his chance encounter with Kong then there is the chance that he may not have been able to leverage the New Testament Church’s organisation and resources to the degree that he did in

²⁶⁷ Hong, E. (1983). *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*. Taipei, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 5.

²⁶⁸ Anonymous (1993). *Defending the Truth. Mount Zion*, Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Page 28.

establishing Mount Zion. While Mount Zion is the product of Hong's vision and dedication, it has become what it is today under the auspices of the New Testament Church. Mount Zion serves a special role for Hong in his role as leader of the New Testament Church and, more importantly, as God's apostle in the modern era.

Hong firmly believes that God's chosen vessel in each era must have a place. Only when the vessel is in the specific consecrated place will his or her teaching be most clear. Starting with the key Old Testament prophets of Abraham, David, Solomon and Elijah, Hong ascribes each of them a specified place, all of which are now established biblical locations such as Canaan and Jerusalem. As God's chosen vessel of her era Kong also had a place. Unlike all the other prophets, Kong did not have a mountain as her chosen place; instead she had an apartment in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, her apartment was imbued with the same spiritual significance as the places of her biblical predecessors and modern-day successor.

It is too early to gauge the success of Hong's Mount Zion project. Beyond successful developments such as their organic farm, Eden Homestead and Holy Temple, and the ongoing uncertain truce with the state, the ultimate test of Mount Zion's status and efficacy will occur at the Tribulation. And therein lies one of the main reasons for the relocation of Mount Zion to Taiwan: as the venue for the Tribulation. While faithful co-workers of the New Testament Church will ascend up to heaven from wherever they are during the Rapture, they believe that Jesus will descend to Mount Zion. To use Paul Tillich and Catherine Wessinger's terminology, the Tribulation on Mount Zion is the "ultimate concern" of the church.

Hong's revelation that Mount Zion has moved from Israel to Taiwan was made possible by structural changes to Taiwanese society. It is easy to say that the reason the church moved Mount Zion is convenience: Hong and his followers were able to venture into the interior of Kaohsiung County, lay claim to a suitable mountain and then establish a community on it. As attractive as this explanation is, it ignores the fortuitous combination of factors that existed at that time. As the church claimed during their exile, they had earned the legal right to Mount Zion in exchange for having farmed the land for over five years²⁶⁹. Furthermore, Taiwan was undergoing a period of economic growth – both increased personal wealth and greater government expenditure on infrastructure benefited the New Testament Church. People had more money to donate to religious groups and were also able to travel around Taiwan with increased ease, something that made Mount Zion even more accessible to Taiwanese society. Furthermore, the leeway afforded to Protestant churches by the KMT allowed membership to grow in the years prior to 1965, allowing Christian thought to reach a wider audience than it had before.

Despite their professed adherence to a 'God-based' lifestyle, based on their strict adherence to the teachings of the Bible and expressed through the education system and organic food production that are cornerstones of church life, there are undoubtedly aspects of Chinese culture that are behind the relocation of Mount Zion from Israel to Taiwan and subsequent spread of the New Testament Church across the world. These Chinese cultural aspects begin with Hong's divine authority. Chinese rulers have traditionally invoked their divine mandate as the justification for

²⁶⁹ Anonymous (1986). *KMT's 20-year persecution on NTC*. New York, Church of New York. Page 12.

their activities. As God's chosen prophet Hong consistently does this, especially with regard to the relocation of Mount Zion. Since taking control of the church Hong has made Mount Zion its geographical focus and pre-eminent holy place.

The way in which the Holy Temple and El Zion are aligned with the surrounding landscape suggests a distinct Chinese sensibility. In replicating the traditional layout of Chinese temples, the New Testament Church has designed their key sacred area in a way that maximises its geomantic properties. As the church denies this, it could simply be that the area around El Zion has been laid out according to the Chinese temple design principles with which Hong and the co-workers were undoubtedly familiar. The careful placement of objects around El Zion suggests much consideration was put into their construction; if geomancy was not important then the area might have more closely approximated that of a traditional western church or some different layout altogether. Possessing Mount Zion has allowed the New Testament Church to tailor a sacred site to their specific requirements.

Mount Zion in Taiwan serves as a venue for the New Testament Church to protest against Taiwanese modernity. Its relative isolation allows the church to conduct activities that it might not be able to do elsewhere. The church's emphasis on organic produce and home schooling program both challenge the dominant paradigms of mainstream Taiwan. Likewise, the prominence given to the beauty and transformative power of Mount Zion's natural environment and sense of cooperating with nature is in strong contrast to Taiwan's recent rapid industrialisation. This sense of cooperation is consistent with existing Chinese religious thought. In

attempting to live in harmony with the environment, the New Testament Church has been able to create its own God-based utopia on Mount Zion.

Having a base on Mount Zion allows the New Testament Church to do more than just prepare for the Tribulation. As their own 'Eden', it allows the church's co-workers to transcend the atheistic and profane world and enter into a higher state of existence with God. This can be done simply by being on the mountain and acting in accordance with the tenets of the church. It is important to distinguish between Mount Zion and God; Mount Zion is not God. Instead, He is the God of His chosen place – Mount Zion. However, the majesty of Mount Zion and God's presence there permeates far beyond the physical boundaries of the mountain.

Mount Zion is an important tool in the growth of the New Testament Church. Not only is it an attractive and majestic mountain with an interesting community and controversial past—something that piques the interest of outsiders and draws them in—its power extends to the far reaches of the church's other consecrated lands throughout the world. It is important that foreign lands such as UNNS Ω are considered by the church to be equal to Mount Zion in terms of sanctity and the presence of God. Having established Mount Zion as their focal point, the New Testament Church now leverages it to sacralize their other properties, thereby allowing foreign co-workers to be included in the mountain's majesty. Mount Zion can therefore be seen as a force that unifies the church.

The relocation of Mount Zion to Taiwan is dependent on the revelations experienced by Hong alone. It is, as with all eschatological phenomena, impossible to test the

sincerity of these through any means other than the faith of the co-workers. Their faith and commitment to Hong's vision for Mount Zion in Taiwan stretches well beyond merely spiritual concerns. Creating a model of a new society based on their interpretations of scripture and history has only been possible in the face of such adversity through solidarity and single-mindedness. With their labour, Hong and his co-workers have moved a mountain.

Appendix – photographs



Figure 1: The Main Temple at UNNS Ω

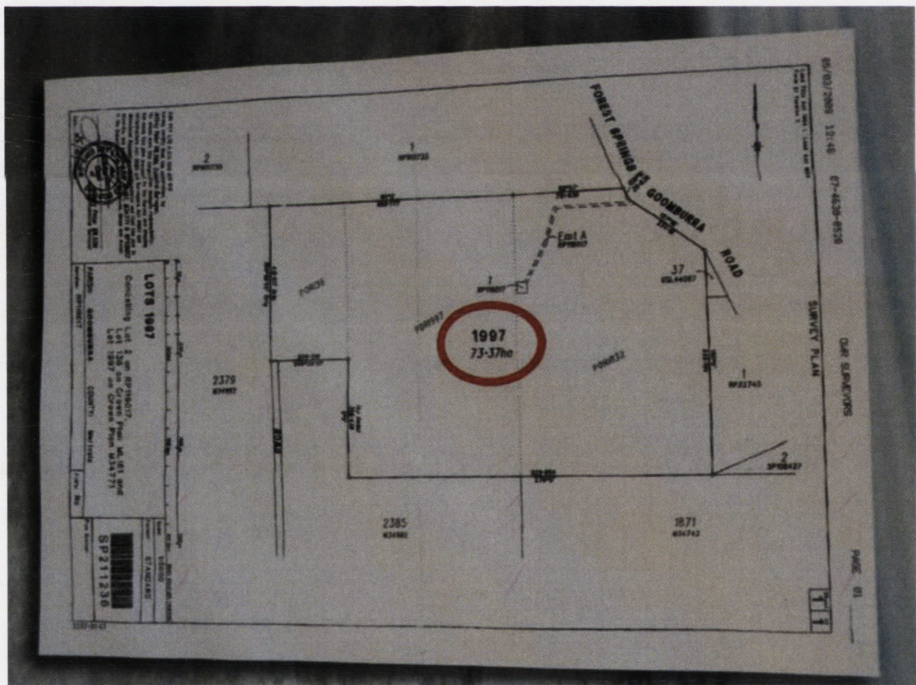


Figure 2: Local council zoning documents for UNNS Ω



Figure 3: Kong blesses Hong (reprinted from *A Man and a Mountain Chosen of God*, page 5 of the picture section)



Figure 4: Poster showing the conflict with KMT (the bleeding woman is in the centre of the poster)



Figure 5: Entrance to Mount Zion from Highway 21



Figure 6: Cherubim gate



Figure 7: Zion's stronghold



Figure 8: The Heavenly Pond and Triumph Hall (The Victory Hall is obscured by the sign)



Figure 9: Dining room in Victory Hall (note large Omega to the left)



Figure 10: Truth Triumphs Over Despotism



Figure 11: Ensign of All Nations flying over David Citadel



Figure 12: Zion Tree House



Figure 13: 'Jacob's Winter Song' written on the Sacrificial Altar at Mount Zion



Figure 14: The Holy Temple and Sacrificial Altar



Figure 15: The altar inside the Holy Temple



Figure 16: Poster adjacent to the altar in the Holy Temple



Figure 17: Christ is the Rock



Figure 18: Vegetables and plantation trees (the peak of Mount Zion is in the background)

Glossary

Alan (my tour guide)	李明偉
Assembly Hall Church	地方教會
Cherubim Gate	基路伯大門
Christ is the Rock	基督是磐石
The David Citadel	大衛城堡
The Dawnligh Tree House	曙光樹屋
Eastern Lightning (<i>dongfang shandian</i>)	東方閃電
The Heavenly Pond	天池
Elijah Hong (Hong Sanqi)	洪三期
Geomancy (<i>feng shui</i>)	風水
Forest Bath Sidewalk	森林浴步道
Holy Temple	聖殿
Jiashian	甲仙
The King Shed	立君亭
LOHAS	乐活
Mount Zion	錫安山
New Testament Church	新約教會
Sacrificial altar	祭壇
Sis. Kong (Kong Duen Yee or Jiang Duanyi)	江端儀
Tent of Shem	閃的帳棚
Triumph Hall	凱旋樓
Truth Triumphs Over Despotism	真理戰勝強權
Victory Hall	勝利大樓／陳列總館
Zion's Stronghold	錫安保障
Zion Tree House	錫安樹屋

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